

Lamp to My Feet, Light to My Path:  
Understanding Biblical Engagement for Transformation

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

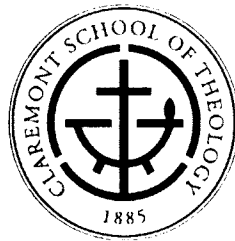
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May 2014

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## Abstract

### Lamp to My Feet, Light to My Path: Understanding Biblical Engagement for Transformation

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This dissertation is practical theological reflection on a phenomenological study of the relationship between the Bible and lay readers. Despite the pivotal role that the relationship between the Bible and its Christian readers can play in their well-being and receptivity to pastoral care and counseling, this relationship has received little attention in pastoral theology, hindering the possibility that pastoral caregivers can foster well-being of careseekers through engagement with the Bible. Through phenomenological study of in-depth interviews with Korean American Presbyterian lay adults, the psycho-spiritual dynamic of the movement of the heart is identified as an element of spiritual epistemology and transformation.

For this practical theological reflection, the author designed a pastoral theological phenomenological qualitative research method by revising the phenomenological reduction process through a postcolonial lens. After the introduction, chapter 2 covers such revision and research design. Based on the data collected through the phenomenological research, the practical theological reflection moves from the descriptive task of presenting the result of the in-depth interviews in chapter 3 to the interpretive task in chapter 4. This is done through interdisciplinary dialogues with self-psychology, relational cultural theory, positive psychology and Christian and Confucian spirituality. These dialogues explore the tension between the self and relationship,



psychological dynamics of the movement of the heart, and cultural layers that point to the spiritual dynamics within Confucianism. The dialogue with Confucian spirituality reveals subaltern spiritual consciousness that creates spectrality that influences the postcolonial situation of the contemporary Korean American Christians. In chapter 5, for the normative task, this finding is put in conversation with postcolonial theories, theologies, and biblical hermeneutics to construct a postcolonial pastoral theology of biblical engagement. Reflection on ambivalence, mimicry, spectrality, and postcolonial anxiety as part of the postcolonial experience is engaged in dialogue with the findings of this study, which leads to a deeper understanding of the reason why principles like inerrancy, orthodoxy, and spiritual hygiene are conspicuous in the Korean and Korean American Christian life. In chapter 6, for the pragmatic task, the author suggests practical wisdom gleaned through the study that can be applied to pastoral care and counseling practices. It includes a non-linear Bible reading process; insights into the power dynamics in Bible reading as power-for and power-with rather than power-over, reflections of pastoral liminality, pastoral authority, and empathy. Author constructs a pastoral vision for postcolonial imagination and concrete future memory that enables growth toward complex spiritual maturity.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the pivotal role that the relationship between the Bible and its Christian readers can play in their well-being and receptivity, and sometime in their ill-being and resistance, to pastoral care and counseling, this relationship has received little attention in pastoral theology, hindering the possibility that pastoral caregivers can foster well-being of careseekers through engagement with the Bible. This dissertation argues that analysis of this relationship, informed in part by first person narratives, can increase pastoral theological understanding of the experience of engaging the Bible and result in formulation of pastoral care and counseling practices that support and empower the transformation process of Christians who engage the Bible.

#### Discussion of the Problem

The Bible as scripture has a unique place in Christian practices. While the Bible has a place in most Christian worship services, it also has a place in many Christians' lives outside of religious services. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reports that 35% of the total U.S. population reads the Bible weekly outside of religious services, with 48% of Protestant Christians doing so.<sup>1</sup> This number becomes higher among participants in evangelical and historically black churches, with 60% reading the Bible weekly on their own. One of the principles of the Reformation, *sola scriptura*, which means "by scripture alone," has continued to have theological significance in reformed and evangelical churches. Similarly, if we use the market as a relevant gauge for people's need, desires and practices, it is very informative that a quick search on Amazon.com

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008," <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf> (accessed April 28, 2013).

with the keywords “Bible devotion” yields 5,313 book publications. These are tailored to various audiences: children, youth, women, men, soldiers, couples, people with mental health issues, people with relationship issues, and so on.

When engagement with the Bible is experienced in Korean American culture, it gains another layer of weight because of the idiosyncratic way in which scriptures in Confucian culture are engaged. Scripture in Confucianism has been understood very differently from the Christian definition of scripture I will use in this dissertation. While Confucian scriptures claim no divine revelations, they have carried much authority as respectable wisdom that is supposed to be applicable to the everyday lives of people living under their authority because of the way in which they have been woven into daily lives. Through the study of scriptures, students’ characters have been formed and traditions have been taught. Accumulation of scriptural understanding has also played a practical role in the livelihoods of upper-class families, since to enter government offices they needed to pass examinations that tested their scriptural understanding. While in office, political decisions were reasoned and rationalized based on the interpretations of the Confucian scriptures. On the other hand, as I have explored elsewhere, people of the lower class were also educated in a simplified version of Confucian scriptures that was tailored to the desires of the upper class to maintain the status quo.<sup>2</sup> While such historical particularity may not be apparent through a cursory survey of the experiences of Korean American Christians, it forms the undercurrent of the religious environment in which contemporary Korean and Korean American Christians’ understandings of scripture develop.

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<sup>2</sup> Hee-Kyu Park, “The Silver Dagger: The Cultural Hybridity and Premarital Sexuality in Evangelical Korean American Women,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 22, no. 1 (Summer 2012), <http://www.spt-jpt.org/index.php/jpth/article/view/23/pdf> (accessed August 16, 2013).

While the Bible seems to have an established place in the life of many Christians, engagement with the Bible has been for some time a largely neglected area in pastoral theological literature. Stephen Pattison calls this the “strange silence of the Bible in pastoral care,” which results from “the relative neglect of the Bible in pastoral care theory and practice.”<sup>3</sup> Factors contributing to this silence, he contends, include the distance between detail-oriented biblical scholarship and actual Christian life, as well as the challenge to biblical authority created by historical-critical approaches to biblical interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

Silence about the Bible is not absolute; as discussed later, there have been various attempts to engage the Bible with pastoral theological insights. However, when pastoral theologians do address this subject, the Bible is understood to be a reference or resource for pastoral care rather than scripture, that is a being with agency and authority. This results in a “top-to-bottom” power dynamic in which the pastoral person utilizes the Bible to convey the biblical message to the pastoral care-receiver who is regarded mostly as its recipient. For example, more than half a century ago, Wayne Oates advocated for pastoral caregiver’s diagnostic use of the Bible, and Carroll Wise set the example of using psychological insights as interpretive lenses for the study of the Bible.<sup>5</sup> William Oglesby approached the subject thematically, finding themes in the Bible relevant to pastoral care giving situations, an approach that has been utilized by some others.<sup>6</sup> In other cases, the Bible is used simply as a proof-text for a point that a pastoral theologian wants to make. The *Using the Bible in Pastoral Practice* series published in the U.K. by

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 106-07.

<sup>4</sup> Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care*, 109.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne Oates, *The Bible in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953); Carroll Wise, *Psychiatry and the Bible* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956).

<sup>6</sup> William Oglesby, Jr., *Biblical Themes for Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980).



Darton, Longman and Todd, which includes *The Bible in Pastoral Practice*, *Holy Bible, Human Bible*, and *Using the Bible in Christian Ministry*, is a welcome collection of studies that deals with the issue of the Bible's role in pastoral theology from multiple perspectives, providing a conceptual map for engaging the Bible in pastoral settings. These works begin to provide valuable stepping-stones for pastoral theology's engagement of the Bible. However, when we pose the question of whose encounter with the Bible is valued most in these works, we find that attention is heavily focused on pastoral caregivers. An additional focus is needed, especially when a theological commitment to God's immanent presence with humanity is taken seriously: if God is with everyone, not only with the pastoral person, then attention to the layperson's experience and view of the Bible as well as to that of the pastoral caregiver is needed.

A shift similar to this has been quite visible in the field of Biblical studies. While historical and critical perspectives dominated the field during the last century, a plethora of reader-centered approaches to biblical studies have come forth in this century, such as liberation, feminist, black theology, and postcolonial interpretations. While these developments are not exactly shifts from pastoral caregivers' to laypersons' perspectives, great attention has been given to the question of who has access to and authority to interpret the Bible. However, a frustrating reality still remains: while Biblical scholars have diversified their approaches, their reader-centered approach is still focused on the experience of biblical scholars as readers,<sup>7</sup> with little attention given to laypeople as readers.<sup>8</sup> Andrew Village, who did an empirical study of the Bible reading of laypeople,

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<sup>7</sup> Or often, the Biblical scholars construct their imaginative readers located in the context that they want to address.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the three editions of *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, edited by postcolonial biblical scholar R. S. Rugiritharajah are landmark works that contained

thinks that empirical studies of Bible reading are rare because there are many difficulties and dangers associated with laypersons' Bible reading. Probably reflecting the tendency toward a hierarchy that places academics and clergypersons as guardians of sound theology, he states that such studies are rare because "they enter dangerous territory."<sup>9</sup> For him, the dangerous territory is where those whom he calls ordinary people have a say in what is important doctrine: "for those for whom the Bible is sacred scripture (and I count myself among them), asking 'ordinary' people how they interpret the Bible might seem to carry the implication that popular practice should overrule sound doctrine."<sup>10</sup> Here we can see how such a concern is important to those who are guardians of what Village calls "sound doctrine." These hierarchical attitudes regarding biblical interpretation have already led to patronizing laypersons, because they are considered too dangerous to entrust with important matters. If such anxiety has contributed to the lack of attention to the lay reader's experience, then this is all the more reason why we need to examine such oversight to see if any of our assumptions about the role of the Bible in Christian religious life have anything to do with the gap between academic theological work and lived religion, that contributed to the discomfort that rendered pastoral theologians silent for certain period of times as Pattison noted.

Attention to the experience of the lay Bible reader, as compared to the pastoral theologian or pastoral caregiver, becomes poignantly meaningful when the Bible is approached as scripture. Understanding the Bible as scripture follows a long tradition of

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reader-centered biblical interpretation from Third World locations. While it was an effort to collect the vernacular interpretations from different contexts and locations, these works are also produced by biblical scholars however marginalized they may be.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay People: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Village, 3.

Christian assertion that the Bible is “inspired by God and as such it was to be regarded as uniquely authoritative and relevant to all people at all times.”<sup>11</sup> To a great extent, this understanding has been compromised by historical-critical biblical scholarship, which analyzes the Bible as a textual object. When the Bible is understood to be scripture, it is experienced subjectively. In other words, the one engaging the Bible experiences it as a being that has agency and authority. This agency may be most vividly described in Hebrews 4:12, which states, “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (NRSV). Such a scriptural understanding of the Bible as living and active allows a relationship to form in caregiving situations among three agents: the pastoral caregiver, the care-seeker, and scripture. In this model, God would be present with all three agents, reflecting the theology of the immanent God, Immanuel. By looking at the way the care-seeker engages the Bible, this study examines an aspect of this triangular relationship that has not been formally studied to date.

Personally, this attention to the way we relate to the Bible comes from an early experience of mine that has stayed in my heart with an element of sacred mystery. I grew up in a non-Christian family in South Korea, and I began attending a Presbyterian church in my hometown on my own when I was in the first grade. During my senior year at high school, my parents took much discomfort from the fact that I spent about two precious hours at church each Sunday, when I needed to be focused on studying for the college entrance examination, which remains an anxiety-filled rite of passage for Korean youth. While my parents made it clear that they believed my religious commitment during that

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<sup>11</sup> Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care*, 109.

time needed to be placed on hold, one very mysterious thing happened. When my senior pastor was making a round of pastoral visits to families that had high school seniors, my mother was contacted and she invited the pastor to visit our home while I was at school. During that pastoral visit, the pastor asked if she had any concerns for me that she wanted lifted up in prayer, and she remembered my complaint about not being able to sleep deeply enough. Hearing that concern, the pastor quoted Psalm 127:2 (taking a phrase out of context) and told my mother to deliver this biblical message to me. My mother wrote it down carefully on a piece of paper and read it to me: "God grants sleep to those he loves." I remember rejoicing over the incident for various reasons: my mother had invited my pastor to our home, she listened to a biblical message with seriousness, and, most of all, she delivered the message to me. All of these reasons and more meant much to me, as I longed to have my parents share my faith. I remember I slept well that night. Maybe I felt affirmed. Maybe I felt loved. A small change happened as a result of this interaction. However, the personalized message itself has continued to puzzle me. This verse sounded absurd. Questions rose in my mind: Does it mean that I was not loved when I was not sleeping well? If I don't sleep, am I refusing to be loved? While those questions continued to pop up from time to time, I also recognized the power of the personalized care that was provided to me through this visit and the delivery of the Biblical phrase. Somehow, such questioning did not turn into a critique of the care but serves as an element that keeps this past experience alive, even in the present. With the extensive theological education I have received, I can interpret the Psalm on various levels, but this simple personalized scriptural quotation stands on its own as a precious memory that soothes me whether I sleep well or not. The pastor left the congregation and a very long

time has passed, but this short Bible passage that was taken out of context and given to me has stayed with me. I formed a relationship with this passage as God's message to me, in spite of all my other critical reflection on it. And this relationship has been sustained. Certainly this is not the only relationship I have formed with the Bible as a pastor, preacher, scholar, and pastoral counselor. As a matter of fact, the way that I relate to the Bible has changed significantly through my liberal theological education. I no longer follow the daily devotional pattern of QT (Quiet Time: a devotional Bible reading method developed in Korean Protestant churches), yet I reflect throughout my life on various biblical themes and principles as the long emergence into Biblical studies have formed a particular ethical platform within me. I feel deep discomfort when an assertion is claimed to be "biblical," as this language plucks a peculiar cord in my inner world that is loaded with complex experiences around the word "biblical." Yet, I know the Bible is one of the most powerful languages that I can speak to have an impact on my fellow Korean Christians in the church. As I struggle with such complexity, I cultivated a longing to understand how the Bible impacts the inner world of those who have walked a different path from me, not having received the liberal theological education I received. I suspect that many who interact with the Bible form their own particular relationships with it. I want to understand them.

For my family, this remains as the one and only pastoral care visit that we received in our home from my pastor. However, pastoral visits that utilize the Bible in personalized ways continue to be a major mode in which pastoral care is provided to individuals and families in Korean churches and Korean-speaking Korean American churches. I have also observed that many evangelical pastors from various cultural

backgrounds utilize the Bible in similar ways. As a Korean female pastor and pastoral counselor educated in the biblical interpretation tradition of historical-critical approaches, such a pastoral care environment is familiar to me through my religious formation background yet very distant from my intellectual world. In the episode I described above, the questions that popped into my mind were nonthreatening and playful. Yet, I realize that other questions raised by such use of the Bible in a pastoral care visit could have bigger impacts, both positive and negative. While such a pastoral care practice can be powerfully comforting, it can also violate the agency of those receiving such care by imposing the pastor's perspective over that of the care-receiver. Thus, from my own experience, I pursue the question, how do laypeople engage the Bible? What kinds of relationships are formed when they do? With such questions I enter this study.

### **Discussion of the Thesis**

My thesis is that when we look into the relationship that forms through engaging the Bible, we will build an understanding of how people experience changes through their engagement with the Bible, which will then provide a theological reflection space in which pastoral theologians can formulate transformative strategies to engage the Bible in pastoral care. This expectation is based on the understanding that in a dynamic relationship, the agents involved in the relationship cannot help but have a mutual impact on one another. When the Bible is understood as scripture, engagement with the Bible becomes a spiritual act of encountering the sacred. I suspect that such encountering has various trajectories in terms of how the sacred is experienced, and these depend on the contexts in which the agents involved in that Bible-engaging relationship are located. The contexts include cultural, historical, social, and situational contexts, along with the

personalities of the agents.

This study will focus on the changes experienced by laypeople, because I expect such experiences will reveal some insights into spiritual knowing and their needs for care. I intentionally leave the term “change” undefined to allow room for the research participants to define it on their own terms. Whether positive or negative, behavioral or conceptual, change will include any kind of experience that a person decides to modify. James Prochaska observes in his therapeutic work that changes happen over a stretch of time and involve six stages: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination.<sup>12</sup> Already at the precontemplation stage, a person will have knowledge about the benefit of the change at hand, but such knowledge needs to be attached to other things to get to the tipping point in the scheme of change and produce actual actions. I suspect that at the tipping point when actual changes happen, there is a decisive knowing that such change needs to happen right then and there, which may turn out to be a spiritual knowing, especially when the change is motivated by engagement with the Bible and the relationship arising from such engagement. Since my study will look into the changes that happen in the context of relationships formed around the Bible, such changes can be expected to have multilayered dimensions, understanding of which needs to be thickened. The spiritual epistemology resulting from such study can be expected to be informative for building pastoral care strategies for engaging the Bible.

The multilayered dimensions surrounding such change point to the communal contextual paradigm in which this pastoral theological work is located. John Patton observes a shift in paradigm in pastoral care, which is the very central theme of pastoral

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<sup>12</sup> James Prochaska, “How Do People Change, and How Can We Change to Help Many More People?” in *The Heart and Soul of Change: What Works in Therapy*, ed. Mark Hubble, Barry Duncan, and Scott Miller (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999), 227-55.

theology. He identifies the period from the beginning of Christendom beyond the Reformation to the advent of modern psychology as the “classical” paradigm, in which the focus of the care was on the message of God who “caringly creates human beings in relationship and who continues to care by hearing and remembering them.”<sup>13</sup> With the advent of modern psychology, the focus of care shifted to the person receiving care, thus moving into a “clinical” paradigm, which dominated the field of pastoral care for about half a century. According to Patton’s observation, we are currently living within the communal-contextual paradigm in which we see beyond the person and take the community and the various contexts in which the person and community are located as the focus of care. We have seen such focus on community throughout the history of Christianity, but with the advance of high technology and a globalization process that brought the impact of others’ action on us so much nearer, the scope and complexity of pastoral care has widened and deepened.

Many pastoral theologians have conceptualized this complexity using various metaphors. For me, Bonnie Miller-McLemore’s image of the “living web”<sup>14</sup> makes good sense. The living web seems to be a revised metaphor of what she originally coined as the “living human web.” The image of the living web has more room to include non-human aspects of our lives, such as the Internet and other technological developments, as well as the connectivity of various non-human contexts such as the global environment and climate changes. When such connectivity is understood, suffering and vulnerability as well as resilience and power needs to get heightened attention as important ingredients of

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<sup>13</sup> John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 25.



pastoral theological concern, as the subject of communal-contextual as well as personal care. When the quality of the living web is understood as such, a pastoral theological concern becomes an existential issue: my action as a person in the web along with the person, community, or other context I care for has intricate and profound impact on those I take care of. It touches the web and, in extension, the divine behind, above, and in the web. This dissertation is placed within this context: the changes experienced in relation to the Bible will point to the connections to, and the impact on, this living web.

### **Review of Closely Related Literature**

The literature that deals with the topic of the Bible expands endlessly. In this literature review, I will focus on literature dealing with the role of the Bible in pastoral theology and practical theology. As noted before, in the 1950's, two well-known pastoral counselors, Wayne Oates and Carroll Wise, gave attention to the use of the Bible in pastoral counseling. With great sensitivity to the possible harms done by inappropriate use of the Bible, Oates developed a model for using the Bible in pastoral care by showing how the symbolic functions of the Bible in people's narratives can be pointers to diagnostic tools for psychiatric issues.<sup>15</sup> Through such diagnostic use of the Bible, the pastoral person holds great authority and power to interpret and deliver the messages of the Bible and to convey the psychiatric issues of the care-seeker. With such responsibility put on the pastoral caregiver, Oates advocates for a well-developed biblical and psychological knowledge in the pastor so that he or she can assess the issues brought by the care-seeker and dip into a large pool of biblical knowledge and insights with sensitivity to the possible harm that may be done to the care-seeker's fragile psyche and

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<sup>15</sup> Oates, *Bible in Pastoral Care*.

developmental process.

Carroll Wise focuses on psychological developmental processes in his book,

*Psychiatry and the Bible*. For him,

The Bible reveals the processes and relationships in life which destroy personality, and also the processes and relationships which create personality and make possible its most complete development. 'The Word of God' symbolically expresses the profound relationships between man and God, man and his fellow men, man and himself, and emphasizes that these realities are of God's creation and that God reveals himself through them.<sup>16</sup>

With such an understanding of the Bible, Wise's goal in this book is to connect the complex developmental processes of psychiatric problems with biblical narratives, using the Bible as a place where real-life experiences with those psychological processes are illustrated. Thus, the biblical narratives are used as anecdotal cases through which he analyzes psychological issues, posing them parallel to composite cases from his own clinical work.

Interestingly, after these two giants of pastoral theology published these books, we see a decade of silence on the subject of the Bible in pastoral care. Donald Capps offers two explanations for this silence. One reason would be the dominance of Rogerian counseling, which was "inhospitable to biblically informed counseling."<sup>17</sup> I think this may have been the main reason, as the commitment to the Bible may conflict with the Rogerian commitment to the unconditional positive regard to the client: a combination of the scriptural authority and diagnostic usage of the Bible proposed by Oates and Wise could become an obstacle in forming counselor's unconditional positive regard. Capps' second explanation is that this silence signifies that "considerable consensus had been

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<sup>16</sup> Carroll Wise, *Psychiatry and the Bible* (New York, Harper and Bros., 1956), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Capps, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 27.

reached about the Bible's role in pastoral counseling," which implies that the Bible had an established place within pastoral counseling, which contrasts with the first reason that suggests lack of such place.<sup>18</sup> This silence was briefly interrupted by an article by Donald Houts published in 1969 that draws insights for pastoral care from the Corinthian letters.<sup>19</sup> After this we see another bout of silence until the 1980's. In 1980, William Oglesby, Jr. published *Biblical Themes for Pastoral Care*. He notes that in his time, some ministers had already found that the Bible has "little if anything to do with the practical functioning of the minister."<sup>20</sup> This contrasts with Wayne Oates' time, when he needed to devote a chapter on the use of the Bible with children to warn parents and teachers against the prevalent practice of using the Bible to penalize children's behaviors, as he saw such practice as possible cause of psychosis. Oglesby apparently felt the need to persuade his readers to consider the Bible as a tool that provides valuable insights for pastoral care when addressing specific themes found in real-life issues. He investigates initiative and freedom, fear and faith, conformity and rebellion, death and rebirth, and risk and redemption as pastoral care themes from the Bible that could be relevant to the issues that care-seekers want to address.

Around this time, Donald Capps wrote *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling*, taking on the challenge of marrying historical-critical biblical scholarship with pastoral counseling. He finds a way in form criticism. This work is, as far as I know, the one and only work that directly deals with historical-critical biblical scholarship in the

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<sup>18</sup> Capps, *Biblical Approaches*, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Donald Houts, "Sensitivity, Theology and Change: Pastoral Care in the Corinthian Letters," *Pastoral Psychology* 20, no. 4 (April 1969): 25-58.

<sup>20</sup> Oglesby, *Biblical Themes for Pastoral Care*, 7.

field of pastoral theology.<sup>21</sup> While recognizing counseling approaches and biblical texts as multifaceted, which allows no single way to be presented as the overarching approach to either counseling or biblical interpretation, Capps contends that insight from form criticism reveals that genre-specific structures for biblical passages can provide guidance for pastoral counselors. He uses the examples of psalms, proverbs, and parables as providing instructive structures for grief and premarital and marriage counseling, respectively. For example, he looks into the genre of lament psalm and identifies six structural elements: address to God, complaint, confession of trust, petition, words of assurance, and vow to praise. Heavily relying on Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's view of the death-grief process,<sup>22</sup> Capps shows how these elements provide possible guidance for the grief counseling process, with each element representing a different stage in the process.<sup>23</sup> Such an attempt to correlate scholarly biblical theory with pastoral counseling was a bold yet necessary rite of passage for the field of pastoral theology in its relationship to the Bible. This paved the way for next generation of scholars to bridge the gap between pastoral theology and biblical scholarship from different angles. During this period, Capps observed that form criticism is one of three kinds of biblical criticism: literary, form, and redaction criticism. This observation may have been short-sighted, since biblical interpretive approaches have multiplied, and a theory engaging only one particular form loses its merit as a generalizable theory for pastoral counseling practice. Perhaps the particular connection that Capps made between three genres found in the

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<sup>21</sup> Capps gives Oglesby credit for using biblical scholarship in developing his thematic model, but Oglesby's work does not engage biblical scholars' work in any analysis but only acknowledges his sense of indebtedness to them. Capps, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

<sup>23</sup> In recent studies, psychologists studying grief have identified many different trajectories of grieving processes. It is possible that such findings have made Capps' reasoning less relevant and thus contributed to the lack of attention to his ambitious work.

Bible and three forms of counseling may not be applicable to other genres of Biblical passages and other forms of counseling, which may be the reason Capps' approach was short-lived. However, his effort to bridge the seemingly constantly distanced worlds of the Bible and pastoral counseling is inspiring as a prelude to the next generation of such attempts.

In *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, published in 1988, Stephen Pattison points out the contrast between the essential weight that the Bible carries within Christianity and “an almost absolute and embarrassing silence about the Bible in pastoral care theory.”<sup>24</sup> Pattison suggests that reasons for this are the Bible's limited concern regarding the subject of pastoral care and the distance that highly specialized biblical scholarship has created between the Bible and the theological education that pastors receive. As I noted earlier, the most significant loss that Pattison observes in this phenomenon is the loss of a “scripture principle” that values the Bible as the divinely inspired word of God that carries instructive or inspiring authority over the reader.<sup>25</sup> Many elements have contributed to this loss: a close reading of the Bible that reveals the biblical authors themselves did not assert the scripture principle; reflection on the canonization process, which was accomplished through human institutions; the diversity found within the Bible; liberal critical scholarship's abandonment of the scripture principle; the diversity of biblical perspectives and the cultural distance of the scriptures from present day reality; and so on. Locating himself in such a challenging climate for the Bible, Pattison examines the works of Jay Adams, Howard Clinebell, Alastair Campbell, Donald Capps, and William Ogelsby and identifies five general approaches to the Bible:

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<sup>24</sup> Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care*, 106.

<sup>25</sup> Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care*, 109.

fundamentalist/Biblicist, tokenist, imagist/suggestive, informative, and thematic, respectively. In the following, I will borrow these five categories as the organizing scheme of the rest of the literature review.

The fundamentalist/Biblicist approach exemplified by Jay Adams is mostly found in the field of Christian counseling, which is out of the scope of this particular literature review as I am reviewing work done in the field of pastoral theology. However, the insights from the field of Christian counseling may be worthwhile to put in conversation with the findings of this study for further development of the ideas in the future, but it is out of scope of this study.

The tokenist approach represents a rather inappropriate or irresponsible use of the Bible as a proof-text for the user's agenda. Pattison states that "tokenism, at its worst, may be characterized as the indiscriminate use of parts of scripture to add an air of religious respectability or legitimation to theories or practices undertaken on other grounds."<sup>26</sup> As an example, Pattison shows how Howard Clinebell took the biblical language of "wonderful counselor" found in Isaiah to promote pastoral counseling, when the Isaiah's language of counselor cannot possibly imply the counselor Clinebell had in mind, given its historical and literary context. Behind this inappropriate usage there still lies a pastoral sensitivity that attempts to communicate various layers of the ministry of pastoral counseling, but I would think Clinebell could have engaged the Biblical language with more critical lens that did not compromise its textual meaning. Such is also the case with Marshall Scott's article, "Honor Thy Father and Mother: Scriptural

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<sup>26</sup> Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care*, 120.

Resources for Victims of Incest and Parental Abuse.”<sup>27</sup> Scott finds various Bible verses that can replace the commandment referenced in his article title, a commandment that can potentially marginalize the experiences of incest and parental abuse victims, but those Bible verses are basically taken out of context without much exegetical deliberation. Having identified one work as representing the tokenist/proof-text approach, I would like to add that identification of this approach is an uncertain task. On the one hand, this is because biblical texts may be too integrally a part of the theological thinking of many pastoral theologians, or theologians in general, who use them as part of their vocabularies. Sometimes biblical texts appear without much exegetical effort because of the way in which those texts are digested and understood within religious or wider cultures. On the other hand, the shortage of pastoral theological work involving the Bible may reflect efforts to avoid using the Bible as a proof-text, which turned into an avoidance of biblical reflection.

The imagist/suggestive approach, which Pattison finds in the work of Alastair Campbell, is used by quite a few theologians.<sup>28</sup> At the end of the 1970’s, biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann offered the metaphor of covenant as a possible biblical image for grounding pastoral care practice so it could reflect on the ecclesiology, ethics, interpersonal relations, and language needed to contribute to the formation of communities.<sup>29</sup> In his 2000-2001 Word and World lecture, Archie Smith, Jr. uses the metaphors of the daughter of Zion and the redeemer in second Isaiah to examine the systemic suffering that pastoral theology needs to address. In his work, the biblical

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<sup>27</sup> Marshall Scott, “Honor Thy Father and Mother: Scriptural Resources for Victims of Incest and Parental Abuse,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 42, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 139-48.

<sup>28</sup> Alastair Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “Covenanting as Human Vocation: A Discussion of the Relation of the Bible and Pastoral Care,” *Interpretation* 33, no. 2 (April 1979): 115-29.

metaphors become the lenses through which he looks at reality, and they eventually become the conduits through which images of the divine reality are created.<sup>30</sup> Carol Schweitzer examines the Song of Songs to find a metaphoric vision for pastoral care.<sup>31</sup> In her analysis, she finds the whole book of Song of Songs to be a metaphor that embodies the love and complexity of the relationship that forms in pastoral caregiving. In her effort to be true to the biblical approach to pastoral care, she examines her work against the four principles that Donald Capps identifies in “The Bible’s Role in Pastoral Care and Counseling,” which are the principles of relevance, sensitivity, consistency, and seeing the Bible as an agent of change.<sup>32</sup> Schweitzer views the Bible as an agent of change as the underlying principle of her metaphorical vision. Yet she cautiously examines the power dynamic presented in such an understanding: when the Bible is understood as an agent of change, the Bible may become the tool of the minister or counselor rather than that of the care-seeker, thus the needs of the care-seeker require added attention to another principle, namely, sensitivity. Schweitzer’s caution is rightly due, because the principle as Capps presented it assumes the Bible as a tool or resource of the pastoral caregiver’s ministry, rather than as something with which the care-seeker forms a relationship. When the framework is shifted to the relationship between the Bible and the care-seeker, the Bible can be seen as an agent of change that contributes to the agenda of the care-seeker as well as other persons involved. Schweitzer uses William Brown’s notion of metaphor, in which “seeing as and saying converge in powerful ways to stimulate reflection and

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<sup>30</sup> Archie Smith, Jr., “‘Look and See If There Is Any Sorrow Like My Sorrow?’: Systemic Metaphor for Pastoral Theology and Care,” *Word and World* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 5-15.

<sup>31</sup> Carol Schweitzer, “Song of Songs: A Metaphorical Vision for Pastoral Care,” *Interpretation*, 59 no. 3 (July 2005): 278-89.

<sup>32</sup> Donald Capps, “The Bible’s Role in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Four Basic Principles,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 3 (1984): 10-13.



emotion.”<sup>33</sup> Through her exploration of the metaphor of Song of Songs, Schweitzer reveals a dynamic in which the desires and voice of the care-seeker get restored through relationship.

P. B. Helsel explores the metaphor of good soil in the parable of the sower in relation to the biblical context in which this parable is located.<sup>34</sup> This context reveals that the “good soil” points to those who are marginalized by “the purity codes of established Palestinian society,” just as Jesus was a “person with questionable parentage.”<sup>35</sup> In such a context, the metaphor of good soil functions as a symbol of reconnection for those members of the community that share the same vision and values, which Helsel reconstructs as “the therapeutic practice of ‘re-membering conversation’ that helps persons to evoke supportive figures from their past.”<sup>36</sup> This therapeutic practice serves as a resource for people searching for their own knowledge and skills for living when they are socially marginalized.

It is notable that, in contrast to these works that have taken biblical interpretation seriously and conversed with Biblical scholarship to come to well-grounded conclusions, some pastoral theologians have lifted up biblical metaphors without engaging texts in detail and rather have relied on their intuitive understandings of the texts. Robert Dykstra has compiled such images and many others in his book, *Images of Pastoral Care*, an anthology of texts from pastoral theology, which Donald Capps draws upon to make further connections between the images of the Good Samaritan and the unjust judge in his

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<sup>33</sup> William Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: a Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 5.

<sup>34</sup> P. B. Helsel, “A Life with Roots: Narrative Pastoral Care and Communities of Identity in the Parable of the ‘Good Soil,’” *Pastoral Psychology* 61, no. 4 (August 2012): 485-98.

<sup>35</sup> Helsel, 497.

<sup>36</sup> Helsel, 497.

article, "Pastoral Images: The Good Samaritan and the Unjust Judge."<sup>37</sup> Such prevalence of the use of biblical images in pastoral theology signals an important reality. To borrow an insight from psychodynamic psychology's object relations theory, images, symbols, and metaphors often function as transitional objects for pastoral caregivers as they move away from the biblical world and face the reality of suffering. In other words, pastoral theologians have found that, more than instructive commands or advice, biblical images have a powerful way of formulating our thoughts and self-images and of eventually enabling us to connect the Bible to reality. Such development is significant to my research, as this process reveals something about the relational dynamic between the Bible and readers, even though the readers in these cases are very much limited to pastoral persons, namely pastoral counselors or pastoral caregivers.

Pattison puts Donald Capps' work in the informative approach category. In this approach, the Bible is seen as a resource that can inform pastoral persons' care provision. Capps finds in his work that the structures of the genres used in the Bible can inform some forms of pastoral counseling. However, the information or insights that can be gathered from the Bible include much more. In "The Book of Job as a Resource for Counseling," pastoral theologian Ronald Hopson and biblical scholar Gene Rice explore together the whole book of Job to gain insights for counseling in relation to suffering.<sup>38</sup> The dialogue between Job and his friends is explored to show how the assumptions of the caregivers and the care-seeker are challenged throughout the process. Hospital chaplain Linda West and biblical scholar Roy Jeal examine 2 Corinthians 2:14-6:10 to uncover

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<sup>37</sup> Donald Capps, "Pastoral Images: The Good Samaritan and the Unjust Judge," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 63, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2009): 1-11.

<sup>38</sup> Ronald Hopson and Gene Rice, "The Book of Job as a Resource for Counseling," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 62, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2008): 87-98.

pastoral insights for the care of post-abortion women by conversing with a case study of a woman who had gone through abortion.<sup>39</sup> The biblical passage here is treated as a guiding principle to form a vision for a specific pastoral care area. While bordering on a diary-type of personal reflection, Glenn Harris, another hospital chaplain, finds Psalm 13 helpful to a veteran suffering from PTSD.<sup>40</sup> Articles like Janet Ramsey's "Once in Royal David's City" and "First Do No Harm," and William Oglesby's "Biblical Perspectives on Caring for Carers" review biblical passages to glean diverse kinds of wisdom for the practice of pastoral care; the authors approach the passages as if they existed just to provide them with the insights they seek.<sup>41</sup> Each of these scholars may have slightly different attitudes toward the Bible, but they have a similar assumption in viewing the Bible as a collection of pastoral wisdom texts or resources for pastoral care and counseling.

Though their work is not within the scope of this review, it is interesting that there are several biblical scholars who attempt to offer insights for pastoral care. Paul Walaskay uses historical criticism to offer two models of healing ministry, namely the Hippocratic tradition and the Biblical tradition of healing ministry, in his article, "Biblical and Classical Foundations of the Healing Ministry," which appeared in the *Journal of Pastoral Care* in 1983.<sup>42</sup> In his article, "The Psalms and Pastoral Care," Patrick Miller connects Psalms and pastoral care in a similar way to Donald Capps in *Biblical*

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<sup>39</sup> Roy Jeal and Linda West, "Rolling Away the Stone: Post-Abortion Women in the Christian Community," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 53-64.

<sup>40</sup> Glenn Harris, "A Wounded Warrior Looks at Psalm 13," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 64, no. 4 (2010): 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Janet Ramsey, "'Once in Royal David's City': David's Story in Preaching and Pastoral Care," *Word and World* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 444-50; "First Do No Harm: Pastoral Care Informed by Job," *Word and World* 31, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 367-73; William Oglesby, Jr., "Biblical Perspectives on Caring for Carers," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 38, no. 2 (1984): 85-90.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Walaskay, "Biblical and Classical Foundations of the Healing Ministry," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 37, no. 3 (1983): 196-206.

*Approaches to Pastoral Counseling*.<sup>43</sup> In their article, “Jesus and People with Disabilities: Old Stories, New Approaches,” rehabilitation therapy professor Mary McColl and biblical scholar Richard Ascough argue for a renewed, biblically-based perspective on people with disabilities, engaging only biblical scholarship and works in the field of rehabilitation therapy.<sup>44</sup> These articles seem to signify the existence of a longing to address the distance between biblical scholarship and pastoral care practice.

The thematic approach exemplified by William Oglesby’s work is found to be persuasive by some scholars. The thematic approach understands that the territory a pastoral caregiver or pastoral counselor steps into may be limited to certain thematic areas and seeks to theorize the use of the Bible in terms of those themes. In his article, “Using Scripture in Pastoral Care,” Menno Epp, a Mennonite pastor, reflects on his own use of scripture in pastoral care settings and basically follows the thematic approach in identifying appropriate scriptures for different situations.<sup>45</sup> Standing between the thematic approach and an approach that uses psychology as an interpretive lens, Donald Capps, in his short and whimsical article, “The Bad-Enough Mother,” explores the theme of the bad-enough mother (a playful twist on D.W. Winnicott’s concept of the good-enough mother<sup>46</sup>) through a parodic poem to reveal the importance of the dynamic that our subconscious projection provides in our experiences of biblical narratives.<sup>47</sup> Over twenty-five years after the publication of Oglesby’s *Biblical Themes for Pastoral Care*, Asian

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<sup>43</sup> Patrick Miller, “The Psalms and Pastoral Care,” *Reformed Liturgy and Music* 24, no. 3 (June 1990): 131-35. It is interesting to note that in spite of the fact that their tenure at Princeton Seminary overlaps, Miller does not mention Capps’ work in this article.

<sup>44</sup> Mary McColl and Richard Ascough, “Jesus and People with Disabilities: Old Stories, New Approaches,” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 63, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2009): 1-11.

<sup>45</sup> Menno Epp, “Using Scripture in Pastoral Care,” *Vision* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 63-69.

<sup>46</sup> D. W. Winnicott, “Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena: A Study of the First Not-Me Possession 1,” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 34 (1953): 89-97.

<sup>47</sup> Donald Capps, “The Bad-Enough Mother,” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 59, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 289-92.

American pastoral theologian Peter Yuichi Clark affirms Oglesby's thematic approach as relevant pastoral care guideline to the experience of the Asian Pacific Americans, especially as he explores the biblical themes that Oglesby suggested for further exploration such as naming and being named, dependence and independence, individuality and community, and oppression and liberation.<sup>48</sup>

While not in the categories that Pattison names, there is a group of articles that demonstrate another approach. In these works, the psychiatric problems that Biblical characters experience are diagnosed and analyzed using psychological theories to affirm that the existence of mental health issues is acknowledged in the Bible. This approach very much resembles biblical studies that utilize psychology as an interpretive lens, but the intention behind it is more in line with the effort to surface mental health issues in biblical narratives in order to foster dialogue between psychology and biblical tradition and shed light on pastoral care. An early effort is found in Raymond Council's article, "Out of the Depths: Pastoral Care to the Severely Depressed." Council examines Psalm 22 for symptoms of severe depression utilizing psychological diagnostic categories and then suggests implications for pastoral care.<sup>49</sup> This effort is replicated twenty-some years later by psychiatrist Randall Christenson, who analyzes Psalm 31 and 102 to identify psychiatric symptoms and to gather pastoral care insights.<sup>50</sup> In a *Journal of Pastoral Care* article by Pam Ruthven and Jon Ruthven, we find an attempt by a systematic theologian and a clinical social worker to use the DSM-IV to interpret King David's reign as

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Yuichi Clark, "Biblical Themes for Pastoral Care Revisited: An Asian American Re-Reading of a Classic Pastoral Care Text," *Pastoral Psychology* 54, no. 4 (March 2006): 355-76.

<sup>49</sup> Raymond Council, "Out of the Depths: Pastoral Care to the Severely Depressed," *Pastoral Psychology* 31, no. 1 (Fall 1982): 58-64.

<sup>50</sup> Randall Christenson, "Parallels Between Depression and Lament," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 61, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 299-308.

described in 2 Samuel 11 through 1 Kings 2, though no pastoral care implications are drawn in this article.<sup>51</sup> The existence of such work in a peer-reviewed journal in the field of pastoral care and counseling makes me wonder if the field's strong attraction to psychology may have allowed the reviewers to ignore such an absence of attention to pastoral care and to value finding psychological meaning in the Bible as a worthy enough task for the field.

What Pattison was yet to discover after the publication of *A Critique of Pastoral Care* was Edward Wimberly's work. In *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counseling*, Wimberly draws from the insights of narrative criticism, a method of biblical criticism that had started to draw many biblical scholars' attention by the time Wimberly was writing. Wimberly correlates these insights with the narratives of his counselees to build a theology of a hermeneutic of engagement.<sup>52</sup> Wimberly's work relies on the care-seeker's understanding of the Bible as scripture to identify maladaptive appropriations of the biblical narrative. What he identifies is then used to help the care-seeker re-author a narrative that incorporates scripture in a more adaptive and growth-inducing way. He admits that such an approach is heavily dependent on the biblical literacy of the care-seeker and thus is not applicable to everyone. However, his work pays attention to the dynamic that forms in the relationship between the Bible and the care-seeker, while utilizing new approaches in biblical criticism in close relation to the clinical work of pastoral counselors.

Two decades after Pattison published *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, he and his colleagues initiated a project to revive the usage of the Bible in pastoral care. This effort

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<sup>51</sup> Pam Ruthven and Jon Ruthven, "The Feckless Later Reign of King David: A Case of Major Depressive Disorder?" *Journal of Pastoral Care* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 425-32.

<sup>52</sup> Edward Wimberly, *Using Scripture in Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

brought forth fruit in the book series, *Using the Bible in Pastoral Practice*. The first book in this series, *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church*, is an edited volume. It includes works by church historians to map out the tradition of the ministerial use of the Bible, works by Biblical scholars to pose the challenges of contemporary biblical scholarship, and works by scholars addressing the Bible in pastoral theology and practices.<sup>53</sup> As an edited volume, each article touches on a particular topic that contributes to the overall conversation of the place of the Bible in pastoral practices. The second book in the series is *Holy Bible, Human Bible: Questions Pastoral Practice Must Ask*, which is an Anglican priest's personal reflections on questions he poses from the perspective of pastoral practice.<sup>54</sup> The last of the series is a workbook written by Stephen Pattison, *Using the Bible in Christian Ministry*.<sup>55</sup> This workbook draws from the insights of the first two books in the series and some empirical studies to engage pastoral workers in reflection and analysis of their daily use of the Bible. The series focuses on the role of the Bible as a pastoral care resource and addresses pastoral persons' attitudes toward and understandings of the Bible.

In the literature specifically addressing practical theology, I have identified several works focused on the Bible.<sup>56</sup> The twin volumes of *Theological Reflection: Method* and *Theological Reflection: Sources* by Elaine Graham and her colleagues has located the practical theological reflection within the broader context of historical, biblical, and systematic theologies. As for its biblical engagement, this work navigates

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes, eds., *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> Gordon Oliver, *Holy Bible, Human Bible: Questions Pastoral Practice Must Ask* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Pattison, *Using the Bible in Christian Ministry: A Workbook* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> In this review of practical theological works on the topic of the Bible, it is noteworthy that all but one of them come from the United Kingdom.

through the reflections of various biblical writers and theologians to demonstrate how those reflections take place within and outside the Bible.

Christopher Rowland and Zoë Bennett base their understanding of the relationship between practical theology and the Bible on the image of weaving a web.<sup>57</sup> Rowland and Bennett heavily depend on another practical theological work done by Roger Walton, who, through empirical study of students who learned theological reflection skills at their institution, categorized seven ways in which these students used the Bible in their reflections: those are links and associations, prooftexting, resonance and analogy, exploring a theological theme, extrapolated question to take to the tradition, one-way critique, and lastly mutual critique.<sup>58</sup> Walton's work looks into the interaction between students and the Bible, which is more in line with my proposal to examine the interaction between laypersons as Bible readers and the Bible. Rowland and Bennett find that, among Walton's seven approaches, resonance and analogy have the most potential to contribute to practical theologians' efforts to interpret the Bible, as they are "potentially fruitful ways of describing and exploring the act of weaving experience and text in freshly illuminated, constructive theological understanding."<sup>59</sup> Rowland and Bennett claim that the interpretation of the Bible is ultimately a generating activity, since the interpreter of the scripture, like a spider weaving a web, has to tug various threads such as "tradition, experience, historical situation, and subjective apprehension."<sup>60</sup> This is made possible when the scripture resonates in the interpreter and generates "imaginative

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<sup>57</sup> Christopher Rowland and Zoë Bennett, "'Action Is the Life of All': The Bible and Practical Theology," *Contact* 150 (2006): 8-17.

<sup>58</sup> Roger Walton, "Using the Bible and Christian Tradition in Theological Reflection," *British Journal of Theological Education* 13, no. 2 (January 2003): 133-51.

<sup>59</sup> Rowland and Bennett, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Rowland and Bennett, 13.



engagement” with the scripture.<sup>61</sup>

Andrew Village’s *The Bible and Lay People* is also a practical theological work. Utilizing data from 400 questionnaires that he collected from Christians in the Church of England, Village draws a statistical landscape of laypeople’s Bible reading practices. He uses quantitative methods to achieve “objectivity and rationality,” the value of which will “remain when postmodernity has run its course.”<sup>62</sup> With such positivist/modernist assumptions, he seeks to demonstrate through statistics and his analysis of those numbers the scope of laypeople’s attitudes and beliefs toward the Bible, the scope of their literalism, their various interpretive horizons, the relationship between personality and laypeople’s interpretive tendencies, the relationship between what he calls “interpretative communities” and scripture, and the relationship between charismatic belief and biblical interpretation. This work’s contribution is that it is the first practical theological work that has focused on the ways in which laypeople interact with the Bible by asking them directly, instead of engaging in guesswork based on postulating an imaginative lay Bible reader, which has mostly been the way reader-centered biblical critics have done their work.

While these practical theologians have reflected on the ways in which readers engage the Bible, Paul Ballard examines the Bible as a source of practical theological reflection in order to strategize means by which to engage it reflectively. He examines the formation process of the biblical canon and concludes that the Bible is “best understood as working within a concept of midrash; that is, it comes out of, belongs to, and informs

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<sup>61</sup> Rowland and Bennett, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Village, *Bible and Lay People*, 27.

the life and thought of the people of God from in the midst of its ongoing story.”<sup>63</sup> As such, the Bible is located within the life of faith—the Christian formation process—where theological reflection happens constantly. It has the potential to form a habitus, an instinctive wisdom that automatically informs our thinking and praying.<sup>64</sup> Such a dynamic and process-oriented understanding of the Bible opens up possibilities to perceive the Bible in closer relation to our lives, as more immanent than transcendent.

German practical theologian Hans-Günter Heimbrock explores the possibility of reading the Bible by contextualizing it with phenomenological commitment to the “living of everyday life and the worldview that develops out of it,”<sup>65</sup> which “necessitates comprehension of its environment so that one can view its special mode of actuality in the sense of the tension between everyday assumptions and the everyday experience of that which is foreign.”<sup>66</sup> He invites the notion of “thick description” by anthropologist Clifford Geertz to accomplish the task of phenomenological contextualization of the Bible, which reveals intertextuality, a complex relational reality surrounding the text. Heimbrock points out that Geertz’s work reveals that the contextualizing process was facilitated not through rigid planning of data collection but through the socioenvironmental factors, namely relationship with the research participants. This relational context leads him to problematize the process of perceiving the meaning of what is observed, which makes him raise the question of subjectivity: the qualification of

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<sup>63</sup> Paul Ballard, “The Bible in Theological Reflection: Indications from the History of Scripture,” *Practical Theology* 4, no. 1 (April 2011): 44.

<sup>64</sup> Ballard, 45.

<sup>65</sup> Hans-Günter Heimbrock, “Reading the Bible in the Context of ‘Thick Description’: Reflections of a Practical Theologian on a Phenomenological Concept of Contextuality,” in *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, ed. Richard Hays, Stefan Alkier and Leroy Huizenga (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 211.

<sup>66</sup> Heimbrock, 211.

the subjectivity, according to him, becomes a “real theological interest.”<sup>67</sup> This isolated work that appeared in an edited book in biblical criticism paves a path for this dissertation, because, while he does not go as far as to articulate it, Heimbrock’s understanding of intertextuality suggests the possibility of relational understanding of the Bible as a text that has subjectivity.

In literature written in Korean, there is a strong assumption about the authority of the Bible as scripture whether in pastoral visits or in other care settings, such as counseling within the ministry of the church. Most of the available literature that deals with the subject of the Bible is more in line with a Christian counseling model. Many articles written by pastors are also available, but they are usually written as a sermon or devotional reflection that is used in pastoral visits. These materials will be reviewed later in chapter 5 when the role of the Bible in Christian counseling is explored.

### **Methodology and Methods**

This is a work of practical theology. Practical theology takes lived experience as its theological text and reflects on it from various perspectives using multidisciplinary approaches. As the overarching framework of this study, I will roughly follow Richard Osmer’s description of practical theology as movement from the descriptive/empirical task to the interpretive task and then from the normative to the pragmatic task. I envision the interpretive and normative tasks to be more fluid than what Osmer describes in his work, especially because of the interstitial stance that I will take as a practical theologian researcher witnessing the lives of my research participants together with them. This approach will be elaborated in detail in the methodology chapter of my dissertation.

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<sup>67</sup> Heimbrock, 219.

Within the practical theological methodology, I will conduct the descriptive task by using the qualitative inquiry method of a critically revised phenomenology. One effective method for gaining understanding of the ways in which people engage the Bible seems to be through conducting in-depth interviews with them. Engagement with the Bible can be understood to be a phenomenon that warrants thick description and interpretation, tasks appropriately accomplished through phenomenological methods.

The phenomenological method in its original form, however, comes with its own set of epistemological and philosophical assumptions that need to be examined. While this methodology focuses on the lifeworld and its particularity, which is pronouncedly opposed to the positivist approach, the original philosophical methodology laid out by Edmund Husserl aims to reduce a given phenomenon to its essence, which amounts to essentialism and limits understanding of the phenomenon. This is problematic as a methodology for pastoral theology. It needs to be noted that, unlike other qualitative methodologies, phenomenology is overdeveloped in its philosophy and lacks adequate formation of research methods, which aspect will be explored further in chapter 2.

In such an environment surrounding this methodology, I find two currents in which phenomenological research methods have developed. First, there are researchers who adhere to the original philosophical methods of the founders of phenomenology and seek to refine them into social scientific methods. These researchers include Clark Moustakas, Gunnar Karlsson, and Amedeo Giorgi, and Barbro Giorgi.<sup>68</sup> The second

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<sup>68</sup> Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994). Gunnar Karlsson, *Psychological Qualitative Research from a Phenomenological Perspective* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1993); Amedeo Giorgi and Barbro Giorgi, "The Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method," in *Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design*, ed. Paul Camic, Jean Rhodes, and Lucy Yardley (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003).

current is found with those who do not engage the original methods but combine the philosophical commitment to the lifeworld with other theories, such as Gadamer's hermeneutics or feminist theory. In such approaches, the integration of theories happens at the researcher's philosophical commitment level, with minimal deliberation on the details of the methods. The general guidelines for data collection and analysis found among other qualitative research methods seem to function as the guidelines for phenomenological methods, without any phenomenology-specific parameters. Such an approach is represented in works like *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* by Jonathan Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin and *Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research: A Practical Guide for Nurse Researchers* by Marlene Cohen, David Kahn, and Richard Steeves.

Disappointingly, in my bibliographic research, feminist or postcolonial critique of the essentialist philosophy of phenomenology that results in modification of the research method is yet to be found. Such modification will require relational reflexivity that moves away from the essentialism that objectifies research participants and rather emphasizes researchers engaging in rigorous self-reflection and identifying the relational impact of the interaction happening throughout the research process. The phenomenological assumption that a researcher can take an objective stance by achieving Husserl's notion of epoché needs to be examined more critically from such a reflective and relational stance, as the phenomenon that the researcher examines will inevitably include her in the moment she interacts with the participants. Such modifications have been developed for other qualitative research methodologies, such as ethnography and grounded theory, with the most impressive ones having been developed by researchers using indigenous

methodologies, such as Margaret Kovach and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.<sup>69</sup> Dialoguing with these researchers' works and postcolonial theories and theologies, I will critically modify the research method of phenomenology for the descriptive/empirical part of my practical theological reflection into one that reflects a non-essentialist commitment.

The interpretive tasks of this practical theological work will be carried out in multidisciplinary ways. The data gathered through the empirical task will be put in conversation with the psychodynamic theories of self psychology and relational-cultural theory and with Confucian spirituality. The interpretation generated will be put in conversation with postcolonial theology and biblical hermeneutics to construct a postcolonial pastoral theology of biblical engagement. The goal will be to build a thick understanding of the relationships formed between laypersons and the Bible and the influence of such relationships on any changes that happen in their lives. This thick understanding will become the foundation of my theological reflections leading to the construction of pastoral theological implications for pastoral caregivers and counselors.

### **Definitions**

In this section, I will explain some of the terms that I will be using. First, I use the word *scripture* in a particular way. Scriptures can be understood in different ways according to the religious traditions and cultures in which they are situated. As I described at the beginning of this chapter, Confucian scriptures have their particular functions within the tradition of Confucianism, not so much as divine revelation but more as source of respectable and practical wisdom. When *scripture* is used within the

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<sup>69</sup> Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012).

Christian context, I use it to denote the perspective that the Christian Bible is divine revelation, which reflects the scripture principle that Stephen Pattison names.<sup>70</sup> This understanding of scripture does not necessarily indicate a literalistic interpretive stance but is more of a reflection of the faith stance that grounds a reader's attitude toward the Bible. *Scripture* could be translated as 경전 or 경서 in Korean, the latter having more of a scholarly connotation than being a word used in everyday lived religion. The Korean word for scripture that conveys the scripture principle better is 성경말씀, which is a combination of 성경, literally translated as "holy scripture," and 말씀, which is a term of respect for "words" or "voice." When this word is abbreviated, the abbreviated form is 말씀. Thus, an invitation to read the Bible, "말씀을 보시겠습니다," when translated word for word into English, renders the interesting expression, "Let us look into the word/voice." In other words, this Korean word for scripture carries the scripture principle within its linguistic structure. I prefer to use 성경말씀 for scripture because this word implies that the Bible has a sense of agency and authority; this concept could be an important element in helping specific types of relationships form between the reader and scripture.

Since this study will look into the relationships that form around the experience of laypeople's interactions with the Bible, the term *relationality* needs to be clarified as well. Relationality denotes quality of relationships that entails layers of complex dynamics. There are several elements that I assume when I talk about relationality. First, when relationships are formed, all parties involved in the relationships impact one another and therefore form a power dynamic. The specifics of this power dynamic fluctuate according

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<sup>70</sup> Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care*, 109.

to the context surrounding the relationships and the inner dynamics within each agent, and various layers of power dynamics can form simultaneously. If the Bible is understood to be scripture and thus is experienced as an agent, I assume such power dynamics can emerge from the relationships that laypeople form with the Bible. Second, relational connections have different qualities, including strength, authenticity, vulnerability, mutuality, and creativity. These qualities, when correlated with the various power dynamics that fluctuate within the relationships, can become the context of both resilience and violence. I intend to dialogue with relational cultural theory to explore these qualities. Lastly, relationships are often places where the sacred is located. This is an insight I am drawing mostly from my clinical work, through which I have had the profound privilege to encounter the sacred, the presence of God, within the relationships formed in the counseling room with my clients. My theological assumption in my clinical work is that of the Imago Dei: according to the book of Genesis, God created all human beings with the image of God, thus the image of God is present in every human being regardless of his or her faith, morality, culture, gender, socioeconomic class, abilities, and so on. While I have expected to find the Imago Dei within my clients, I have come to realize that the most holy encounters with the sacred have actually been revealed to both my clients and me in the context of our relationships as we, two strangers, have begun to trust and become more and more vulnerable with each other.<sup>71</sup> While God's faithful presence may be consistently there no matter what, I have observed that there has been a quality of relationships in which the experience of the sacred has become more accessible.

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<sup>71</sup> Duane Bidwell explores such spiritual dynamic that finds its location within the relationships rather than in individuals by basing his conceptualization on social constructionism in his article, "Real/izing the Sacred: Spiritual Direction and Social Constructionism" *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2004), 59-74.



Again drawing from relational-cultural theory, that quality could be characterized by vulnerability, authenticity, and resilience. This particular understanding of relationships as the locations of the sacred comes from my very limited experience. The interviews I conducted provided me opportunities to have a glimpse of the sacred in the relational context I formed with my interviewees and in the relationships that the interviewees formed with God and the Bible.

### **Audience**

Korean and Korean American theology students and theologians are my primary intended audience. As Korean and Korean American scholars in the United States, this group of people eventually gets to read one another's works during their academic career. I hope to be part of the conversation that forms through such process. This means that my study will show one manifestation of Korean American experience in one particular way: it cannot represent the whole Korean American experience. At the same time, this audience will keep this work accountable as a description of something that my Korean and Korean American brothers and sisters would recognize as possible and helpful within their cultural hermeneutical horizon.

Another important audience is the academic community of pastoral theologians and practical theologians. There has been a thirst for pastoral and practical theological studies of Korean and Korean American communities in the field of pastoral and practical theology, as theological education institutions have seen many Korean students enter into theological studies. Also, the presence of Korean American immigrant churches has become hard to ignore in the landscape of American religion. For example, within the denomination of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), there are three non-

geographic presbyteries for Korean American Presbyterian churches, which was an accommodation that impacted the political landscape within the denomination. Given such a situation, pastoral theological work done within Korean American churches can become a valuable resource for pastoral theologians who seek resources for Korean and Korean American students and congregations.

While this study will provide resources for Korean and Korean American students and congregations, it will have helpful implications for non-Korean pastoral theologians as well. This work continues past pastoral theological reflection on the role of the Bible in pastoral care and pastoral counseling. I think it has been challenging to find a place for the Bible in pastoral theology, because it is very difficult to find a way to reconcile the complexity of the Bible and the complexity of the pastoral theological task of dealing with the complexity of lived experiences. Such complexities can only find their places when located in the particular. The Korean American context is the particular place where this exploration is located, but the theological reflection provided in this study should provide insights and generate questions for whoever wants to explore the role of the Bible in pastoral care and counseling. Just as my literature review revealed, efforts to engage the Bible as a resource have constantly been present in the field of pastoral theology. Therefore, I expect that some non-Korean pastoral theologians will be interested in this study.

I would also like to find an audience among biblical scholars who work on reader-centered hermeneutics. Biblical scholars have been facing a longstanding dilemma. Those who are doing biblical studies with readers from marginalized communities or non-Western communities have found that their works are not reaching their intended

audiences. Such a frustrating situation occurs because oftentimes the communities that are the intended audiences, communities that are dealing with issues that need radical liberating approaches, are usually grounded in more conservative theologies, such as evangelical, fundamentalist, or Pentecostal theologies. With such theological gaps between them and their intended audiences, scholars engaged in liberating biblical interpretive work find that their writings often do not have the intended impact. My study has the potential to provide insights that may point toward a way in which conversations between theological/pastoral persons and laypersons in marginalized or oppressed communities regarding Biblical messages could have different dynamics.

### **Scope and Limitations**

This study will focus on the relationships that lay Bible readers form with the Bible and the dynamics of those relationships. Factors related to these relationships will be considered not as subjects of the study but as contextual elements of the relational experience.

#### *Scope of the Empirical Samples*

The participants in this study will be two groups of Korean American Protestant Christians who self-identify as Christians who value the Bible highly. The first group will be first-generation Korean Americans who use Korean more fluently than English and identify more with Korean culture. The other group will consist of second-generation Korean American Protestant Christians who grew up in Korean American families and churches. These two groups will allow me as a bilingual practical theologian with Korean nationality who has spent most of my adult years in the United States to occupy an interstitial space, which will provide me with an opportunity to have a revised *epoché*

experience in order to conduct my phenomenological inquiry.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the scope of this study will be limited to Korean American Protestant adults in two different generational groups.

### *Scope of Foci*

The core focus of this study is on the relationships formed between lay adults and the Bible and how changes happen as the laypersons are motivated and formed within these relationships. Given my description of relationality above, this focus on the relationships formed between the participants and the Bible should yield insights into the presence of God in these relationships, which I expect to be closely related to the changes that I will find in the participants. While the way in which these relationships will be analyzed depends on the data from the interviews, I entered into the interviews expecting that Heinz Kohut's understanding of the self's developmental process and relational-cultural theory's conceptualization of relational dynamics might prove to be good conversation partners in the exploration of the relational dynamics between persons and the Bible.

I expect the in-depth interviews to generate much information about various elements connected to the relationships between laypeople and the Bible. Various relationships that the participants experience with people, things, and systems surrounding them will thus become the secondary focus of this study. This secondary focus will yield contextual information for the relationships that are my core focus, and it will broaden the scope of my exploration to culturally located spiritualities and theories

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<sup>72</sup> While the characterization of first and second generation seems to generate a linear conceptualization to describe the linguistic, cultural identity of immigrants, such identity tends to be much more complex than the language seems to denote. Those who immigrated during their teenage years are often denoted as 1.5 generation according to this categorization. As I have come to the United States in my college years, some of my friends have called me 1.2 or 1.3 generation.

about the Bible, including those of Christian counseling and Biblical hermeneutics. The contextual information could be rich and wide in scope. However, this information will be addressed in this study mostly in terms of its role as context for the primary reader-Bible relationships and in terms of the changes experienced in the relational context, not as pieces to be explored independently.

Christian and Confucian spiritualities are explored in terms of identifying the elements that have aided participants' spiritual knowing and led to the changes they identify. The direction of this exploration will depend on the themes and dynamics identified in the empirical data. I expect the possible categories in which Christian and Confucian spirituality themes will be manifested will include sacrificial love, peace, compassion, moving of the heart, vulnerability, and empowerment.

Dialogue with Christian counseling literature that deals with the role of the Bible provides particularly useful insights. The focus of this dialogue will be the ways in which Christian counselors deal with the complexities of lived experiences while maintaining a commitment to the scripture principle, which is very much emphasized in their faith traditions.

My biblical hermeneutics will be limited to that of postcolonial biblical hermeneutics, since postcolonial biblical hermeneutics take narrative and culture into account as central. The biblical hermeneutical dialogue will center on the texts identified by the participants.

### **Originality and Contributions**

As I noted earlier, most of the work done in the field of pastoral theology related to the Bible focuses on the role of the Bible as a resource for pastoral persons' ministries.

Except for the recent work of Andrew Village, the ways in which laypeople interact with the Bible has not received any attention.<sup>73</sup> In contrast to Village's approach, which confirmed pastoral hunches about the Bible-reading phenomenon through statistics, my work will focus on the dynamics of the relationships between the Bible and lay readers. This is an approach that has not been taken before. Such an approach can pave a new path for pastoral theologians in dealing with the Bible, especially since the field of pastoral theology has already accumulated much wisdom in caring for relationships. I anticipate that cultural, psychological, and biblical analyses will reveal useful insights for the ministry of Korean and Korean American pastoral caregivers, counselors, and theologians, but the insights gained may also broaden conceptualizations of the role of the Bible in non-Korean communities.

### **Outline of the Chapters**

1. Introduction
2. Phenomenological Study of Bible Engagement

In this chapter, I explore the empirical component of this dissertation in depth. The philosophical background of the chosen methodology of phenomenology is critically reflected on, and the theological rationale of utilizing this methodology as a pastoral research method is laid out. I intend to modify the phenomenological method by examining it from a postcolonial theological perspective and by drawing from indigenous research methodologies developed by anthropologists and sociologists. Such modifications address the essentialist and positivist tendencies of the original form of

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<sup>73</sup> For the purpose of this study, the student research participants in Roger Walton's work will not be considered laypersons, because in Korean Churches seminarians will not strictly be considered to be laity but rather characterized as belonging to the clergy group. My interviewees, however, can be said to be lay people even within such blurred boundary between clergy and laity.

phenomenology. Such tendencies are problematic for a care-centered paradigm of pastoral theology that considers the particularities of marginalized experiences rather than assuming an essentialist view of reality. This phenomenology modified with postcolonial perspective functions as the overarching interpretive lens throughout the interpretive and normative part of this dissertation, because this modification requires constant interpretation of the data and each discipline that I converse with. Then the rest of this chapter lays out the design of the empirical *piece* of the overall practical theological work of this dissertation.

### 3. Descriptive Task: The Results of the Phenomenological Inquiry

In this chapter, the data gathered from the critically modified phenomenological research are presented and categorized. Following the critically modified phenomenological methods laid out in chapter 2, these data are filtered through the phenomenological reduction process. Data that point to conversational possibilities with various disciplines are identified.

### 4. Interpretive Tasks: Multidisciplinary Interpretations

#### Part 1: Dialogue with Heinz Kohut's self psychology and Relational Cultural Theory

In the first part of Chapter 4, the data from the phenomenological study are put in conversation with two psychological theories: Heinz Kohut's self psychology and relational cultural theory. First, when examining the intra-psychic reality of the relationships that forms between the Bible and its readers, Heinz Kohut's understanding of the development of a self-object and the projection of selfobject transferences shed insights into the development of Korean American laypeople's selves, especially in

relation to a sacred self-object like the Bible. The collectivism of Korean American culture plays a role in motivating a stronger relationship with the Bible, precisely because the collective culture has the tendency to repress the development of individual selves. As such a cultural component plays a role in the experiences of the Korean American laypeople I interview, their spiritual experiences contain strong subconscious motivations to project onto the Bible various self-object transferences, such as idealized, mirroring, or twinship self-object transferences.

Such examination of the intra-psychic relations is put into conversation with relational-cultural theory to illuminate on the development of the relational dynamic surrounding such intra-psychic relations. Relational-cultural theory can provide a conceptualization of the quality of the relationships examined. Relational-cultural theory's concept of growth-fostering relationships with various relational movements is placed in conversation with the spiritual experience of the movement of the heart that the interviewees articulate.

## Part 2. Transformative Spirituality

In the second part of this chapter, we move into the subject of spirituality to understand the cultural layers of the spiritual experience. First, spirituality is examined from positive psychological perspective, which then is put into conversation with Confucian spirituality by examining Confucian literatures. Through this exploration, we look into the ethical and political dimension of the spirituality that is formed within different socio-economic backgrounds, which eventually reveals the subaltern spiritual consciousness that articulates the spirituality of the movement of the heart.

## 5. Normative Task: Constructing a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology of Biblical



## Engagement.

The conversations from the previous chapter are put in conversation with postcolonial theories, theology and biblical hermeneutics to gain practical wisdom for biblical engagement in this chapter.

### 6. Pragmatic Task: Pastoral Care and Counseling Strategies

The overall practical theological reflection of this study generates practical wisdom that can be translated into pastoral care and counseling strategies. The ways the interviewees engage the Bible and the dynamic of their transformations are reflected upon to suggest appropriate pastoral strategies. Also the pastoral person's liminality and authority are reflected upon to strategize the use of the pastoral self in biblical engagement. I also suggest the practice of empathy informed by the findings and the various theorists to construct a more complex form of empathy that pastoral persons could use. This chapter concludes with a reflection on ways to build concrete future memories to foster a maturing process in the Bible reading experience.

### 7. Conclusions

Conclusions from this study is drawn here, with a reflection on the whole process of doing this study. I also suggest some future research directions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHODOLOGY:**

#### **PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF BIBLICAL ENGAGEMENT**

In this chapter, I want to reflect on the philosophical background of the methodology of phenomenology and modify the phenomenological method by examining it from a postcolonial theological perspective. This modification will address the problems that I find in the phenomenological method, which result from conflicts with my pastoral theological commitment. This modified phenomenology with postcolonial perspective will function as the overarching interpretive lens throughout this dissertation. The rest of this chapter will show how this research is designed as the empirical/descriptive piece of the overall practical theological work of this dissertation.

#### **The Need for Pastoral Theological Reflection on Qualitative Research Methods**

Not many practical or pastoral theologians have reflected on the philosophical background and assumptions of the qualitative methodologies that practical and pastoral theologians often use for their empirical research. Without such reflection, pastoral theologians are in danger of choosing their research methods as one might choose a recipe from a cookbook, without reflecting on the philosophical ingredients of such methods. Qualitative research methods, as social science methods, come with philosophical backgrounds that can conflict with theological and ethical commitments that pastoral theologians have. I perceive some urgency in the need for such reflection, especially as students in practical theology departments are expected to conduct qualitative research despite the rarity of pastoral or practical theological reflection to help

them navigate the complicated process of choosing a methodology congruent with their theological commitment.

### **The Epistemological Challenge in Qualitative Research**

In their book, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, John Swinton and Harriet Mowat describe qualitative research methodology as a promising methodology that practical theologians can embrace as a tool to study lived experience.<sup>1</sup> The strength of qualitative research methodology lies in the fact that it is an effective tool to complexify study of lived experience and access ideographic knowledge, while valuing the reflexivity of the researcher. Indeed, with such strength, qualitative research itself can become a pastoral practice that can be transformative, as Mary Clark Moschella shows in her book, *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice*:<sup>2</sup> when ethnography estranges what is familiar and generates narratives that mirrors the reality of the community, Moschella observes, it turns into a pastoral practice through which the pastoral ethnographer and the community “co-author” the future.<sup>3</sup> Swinton and Mowat observe that in spite of the challenges of its different assumptions about epistemology and the nature of truth and knowledge, qualitative research methodology has much to offer to practical theology; they contend that there is a faithful way of using qualitative research methods in doing practical theology. Swinton and Mowat are open to the possibility of finding multiple pathways to overcome the epistemological challenge. Their particular choice is that of the critical correlation method by David Tracy and Don Browning, which “critically correlates questions and answers drawn from the Christian tradition with questions and

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<sup>1</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. (London: SCM Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Moschella, *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Moschella, 238.

answers taken from other sources of knowledge that reside within and impact upon society and culture.”<sup>4</sup>

However, the epistemological challenge that they believe is possible to overcome is not a small one. It is based on the fundamental assumption of modern science rooted in Cartesian binary thinking that requires one to draw a clear line between the self and the object that the self is inspecting. Many qualitative researchers have addressed the problem that this binary thinking causes. For example, Martin Packer traces the problem of the binary thinking between subjectivity and objectivity to a Kantian understanding of human being, which assumes a universal capacity of reason that can provide objective knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Another example is Celine-Marie Pascale’s *Cartography of Knowledge: Exploring Qualitative Epistemology*. Pascale traces this binary thinking to a Cartesian dualistic paradigm, to which she attributes this dualism’s limitations for qualitative epistemology.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, this dualistic thinking leads to very dangerous ground, especially when the pastoral theological research project is looking into vulnerability in our communities and relationships. Three decades ago, Edward Said criticized the common Western conceptualization of knowledge, especially arguing that the knowledge of the other is often a political project of the colonial power.<sup>7</sup> When the self-other binary is established, the other is treated as an object, or a fetish of the subjective knower, enabling the knower to define the characteristics of the other in the knower’s terms, which amounts to

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<sup>4</sup> Swinton and Mowat, 79.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Packer, *The Science of Qualitative Research*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). See especially the Introduction and Part I.

<sup>6</sup> Celine-Marie Pascale, *Cartographies of Knowledge: Exploring Qualitative Epistemologies*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> The kind of questions that drive Said’s reasoning can be found in *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 325.

essentializing the other. This power differential between the knower and the known or the self and the other has long been looked into in postcolonial thought. This very dualism lies at the heart of social scientific methodology, even while the qualitative research methodology appears to value subjective knowledge.

In the field of qualitative methodology in social science, the issue of essentializing the other has been stringently examined. Through the four editions of the *Sage Handbook on Qualitative Research*,<sup>8</sup> Denzin and Lincoln have persistently compiled works of researchers who modified the methodology to overcome this dilemma. However, phenomenology as a branch of qualitative methodology has mostly been neglected in this effort. Unlike other qualitative methods, phenomenology is overdeveloped in its philosophy as compared to the accompanying formation of research methods. A nursing researcher, Jacalyn Lawler, surveys the philosophical and methodological development of phenomenology and points out that

One of the great dramas that is lived out by people working in these areas is making the transition from philosophy to methodology... In the case of phenomenologies, the philosophy seems to overpower the methodology.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, such transition requires the examination of the philosophical tradition, which is not a small task. I suspect that the difficulties associated with examining the philosophical tradition to be the reason for this neglect.

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<sup>8</sup> Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln edited the first two editions under the title *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, published in 1994 and 2000. Then the third and fourth editions were published in 2005 and 2011 under the title of *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Denzin and Lincoln also collaborated with Linda Tuhiwai Smith to edit *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008). These are all impressive compilations of social scientific efforts to look at the various layers of challenges that the field of qualitative research methodology faces. Their effort, of course, includes challenging the epistemological assumptions of Western academia.

<sup>9</sup> Jacalyn Lawler, "Phenomenologies as Research Methodologies for Nursing: From Philosophy to Researching Practice," *Nursing Inquiry* 5, no. 2 (1998): 108.

As a pastoral theologian without a social science background, I stepped into the unfamiliar territory of qualitative research methodology by taking an introductory course on qualitative research methods, which introduced me to several textbooks on this subject.<sup>10</sup> Probably following the footsteps of those who utilized qualitative research methods with what Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy call the “cookbook approach,”<sup>11</sup> I took out those textbooks to find the fitting methodology for my own research question, which led me to phenomenology. Phenomenology indeed fits the bill for many pastoral theological questions, as this particular method is used to answer the question of “what are the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?”<sup>12</sup> Some of my colleagues and predecessors in my program have done research to understand various phenomena that pose pastoral concerns, such as the phenomenon of goose families<sup>13</sup> in Korean American family life, experience of shame by children of pastors, experience of war memories, and so on. Except for the language of essence, which raises concerns for essentializing, phenomenology fits the bill for pastoral theological research that seeks to describe and understand lived experience and navigate through the living web.

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<sup>10</sup> In the course I took, the following textbooks were used: Robert Bodgan and Sari Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007); Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006); John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009); and Michael Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Sharlene Heese-Biber and Patricia Leavy, eds. *Emergent Methods in Social Research*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), ix.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 104.

<sup>13</sup> Goose families denotes the families in which the father is located in Korea working to support the rest of the family that stays in the USA in search for a better educational environment. Usually, the mother stays in the USA with the children who are attending school and the father visits them from Korea seasonally just like a goose migrating between two places according to the season.

Similarly, the internal logic of phenomenology has much room for the relational thinking that a pastoral counselor or a pastoral caregiver as a pastoral theologian would engage in. Just as Michael Patton's research question that asks "the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience"<sup>14</sup> of the given phenomenon points to the essence of the phenomenon as an important element of the phenomenological research question, the task of finding the essence of the phenomenon is an important goal of phenomenological philosophy. In spite of such goal that points to the danger of essentializing, the underlying philosophical commitment of phenomenology is to overcome the dualistic conceptualization of the self and the lifeworld, which leaves potential room for non-essentialistic theological reflection. The relational attitude in which phenomenologists engage in fact resembles that of psychotherapy,<sup>15</sup> in that it provides a framework to discern what among the various psychological dynamics belong to the therapist instead of the client. For example, the identification of various transferences and countertransferences presumes that the psychotherapist has the capacity to bracket her or his self's experience in particular ways to provide the perspectives needed to navigate through the intersubjective reality that exists in the therapeutic relationships. In the same way, empathy, which is the principle or fundamental way of building therapeutic rapport regardless of the therapeutic orientation of the therapist, also requires achieving a distance of a certain quality that shares characteristics with the phenomenological methods of bracketing and epoché, which is the phenomenological method used to block out researcher's presumptions.

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Patton, 104.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, phenomenology and gestalt therapy share the very same philosophical assumption based on Husserl's understanding of phenomenology.

## **A History of Phenomenological Method**

In spite of such a good fit as I have found in this method, I started to wrestle with its appropriateness when I began to follow the directions in the textbooks to learn more about the methodology. The first alarm came to me when I looked into the frequently referenced text, Clark Moustakas' *Phenomenological Research Methods*, which closely follows Husserl's phenomenological reduction process that concludes with "synthesis of meanings and essences,"<sup>16</sup> which made me suspicious of this method's essentialistic assumptions. This suspicion led me to further exploration.

While concern for essentialism was not explicit in the developmental history of phenomenology, the constant revision that phenomenologists have made points to the discomfort that the original layout of the phenomenology method may have provoked. Here, in a grossly simplified manner, let me summarize the history of the philosophy of phenomenology by choosing several key figures and highlighting the concepts relevant to my reasoning. The philosophy that the following philosophers develop expands in greater scope than what is presented here. However, in this discussion, my scope is limited to the key concepts related to the notion of essentialism that various phenomenological researchers highlight as they adopt the phenomenological philosophy as a qualitative research method.

Edmund Husserl, who is often credited as the founder of phenomenology, had forged "a new kind of science—one that moved away from the scientific ideal of positivism which he thought would ultimately result in the dehumanization of society,"

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<sup>16</sup> Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, 100.



according to Linda Finlay.<sup>17</sup> He tried to do that by focusing on the philosopher's subjective experience to get to the essence<sup>18</sup> of the conscious experience of a phenomenon in the lifeworld, that is, the lived experience. Thus, his agenda at its core was to overcome the positivist attitude that sees objective views on things as the prized way of knowing. This epistemology was revolutionary in his time. He tried to achieve this epistemology by strategically structuring his own consciousness: among many notions that he lays out, let me highlight the strategy of reduction, since it played a crucial role when his philosophy was developed into research methodology. The reduction happens at several levels by way of bracketing, which allows him to achieve a state of epoché, which is both a way of looking and being. Epoché, a Greek word that means to stay away or refrain from, is understood by Clark Moustakas as "a preparation for deriving new knowledge but also as an experience in itself, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time."<sup>19</sup> Epoché first abstains from natural sciences by blocking out natural scientific assumptions, then from the natural attitudes we have about the phenomenon. Then the philosopher moves on to transcendental reduction and eidetic reduction, processes that requires the philosopher to repeatedly "look and describe again" the phenomenon with attention to the intensity of its qualities that leads the philosopher to have knowledge of horizons of the phenomenon. These processes are said to eventually yield knowledge of the essence, or the eidos, of the phenomenon that was bracketed in the first place. These

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<sup>17</sup> Linda Finlay, *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World* (West Sussex, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 44.

<sup>18</sup> Husserl wrote in German, and I understand that there could be nuances that are lost in translation. The German word that he uses for essence is *Wesen*, which he uses interchangeably with Greek word, *eidos*.

<sup>19</sup> Moustakas, 85.

two last moves in epoché are what I take as the most dangerous attitude conceptualized by Husserl. This very trust he places in the human imaginative faculty is troublesome when the postcolonial criticism of essentialism is taken into consideration. He believed in the possibility of one person being capable of utilizing his (or her) imaginative faculty, which he calls free imaginative variation, to comprehend the essence of a reality. In this understanding, the desire to understand the essence trumps the need to question the impact of the knowledge, which I understand to result from the epistemological assumption of this understanding: such knowledge produced through such imaginative faculty is treated as a value- and power-free object that does not have political or relational implication.

However, the very existential attitude that the epoché entailed has fostered development of the theory further: the German philosopher Martin Heidegger expanded phenomenology's existential grounding by wrestling with the ontological question of being. Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, which translates into there-being, sees the world and the self as existential beings that are there. Because the self or the world that the self experiences are equally *Daseins*, this view makes a distinction between the subjectivity and objectivity of both the self and the world less relevant. Through this understanding he paved the way for his next generations' understanding of phenomenology, which moves toward more holistic and subjective phenomenology. However, I wonder about the political ramifications of his existential understanding of *Dasein*. If I can assume the consistency in or even a non-radical difference between a person's thoughts and actions, I wonder how his active participation in Nazi Germany's academia as a philosopher did not challenge his conscience. In fact, his former student Victor Farias argued that

Heidegger unsuccessfully tried to become the philosophical leader of the Nazi movement, according to Thomas Sheehan (1988).<sup>20</sup> The existential view of the self and the lifeworld may have succeeded in overcoming the dualism of subject and object. However, Heidegger's ethical failure to see the fault of Nazi Germany points to his view's crucial weakness, which is its failure to reflect on the power differentials between the *Daseins*: when others, who are simply *Dasein*, just as Heidegger was *Dasein*, suffered under the misuse of power by the *Dasein* of the other, it seems that the subjectivity of the suffering *Dasein* did not register as a problem or a challenge to his thinking. Here I take away a lesson to take the power of knowledge into account, especially when making the most profound existential or ontological claim.

Nonetheless, in Heidegger's claim regarding the inseparability between language and understanding, there germinated a turn toward hermeneutic phenomenology. Finlay says,

Existential, hermeneutic philosophers from Heidegger onwards have problematized Husserl's ideas of the reduction and bracketing by highlighting our embeddedness in the world. Understanding, they say, depends on us recognizing our pre-understandings and historicity. Our 'horizons of experience' (e.g. temporal horizons of our past experiences and future anticipations) are implicated and penetrate any perception of the world we may have.<sup>21</sup>

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, informed by Gestalt therapy, noticed the importance of the bodily perceptions of the world. He replaced Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein*, the being-in-the-world, with "flesh-of-the-world," which resulted in locating phenomenology at the most down to earth place to capture the embodied way of being.<sup>22</sup> To our loss, Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology has not quite developed into a

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger and the Nazis," *New York Review of Books*, June 16, 1988, 1-31.

<sup>21</sup> Finlay, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Finlay, 56.

research methodology but remains as a philosophy that informs the interpretive framework of the researcher.

In terms of development of phenomenology as a research methodology, greater impact came from the field of hermeneutics. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology encouraged more subjective and bodily interpretation of phenomena and thus moved away from essentializing tendency of the early forms of phenomenology. Regretfully, however, the phenomenology developed by Merleau-Ponty and his followers did not translate into qualitative methodology. Instead, many social scientists who wanted to use phenomenology as a research method turned to Hans-Georg Gadamer, incorporating his concept of hermeneutic circles into their method as an interpretive strategy.

Currently, in my view, there seems to be largely two trends of phenomenological research methods. First, there are researchers who adhere to the original philosophical methods formulated by the founders of phenomenology seeking to reformat them into social scientific methods. This approach is found in the work of Clark Moustakas,<sup>23</sup> Gunnar Karlsson,<sup>24</sup> Amedeo Giorgi and Barbro Giorgi.<sup>25</sup> The second trend is found in those who combine the philosophical commitment for the lifeworld with other theories, such as hermeneutics or feminist theories. In such approaches, the integration of theories happens at the researcher's philosophical commitment level, with minimum deliberation on the details of the methods themselves. General guidelines for data collection and analysis in qualitative research methods seem to function as their methodological

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<sup>23</sup> Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*.

<sup>24</sup> Karlsson. *Psychological Qualitative Research from a Phenomenological Perspective*.

<sup>25</sup> Amedeo Giorgi and Barbro Giorgi. "The Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method," in *Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design*, eds. Paul Camic, Jean Rhodes and Lucy Yardley (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2003), 243-273

guidelines, using hermeneutics as their main guiding principle without a phenomenology-specific research process. Such an approach is represented in work by Jonathan Smith and his colleagues<sup>26</sup> and by Marlene Cohen and her colleagues.<sup>27</sup> These trends signal room for revision in phenomenological research method but not a green light for unguided improvising. Rather, as Finlay advocates, “research focusing on lived experience could only be considered ‘phenomenological’ if it embraced underpinning theory and philosophy in some way.”<sup>28</sup> According to her, this means that not only the phenomenological philosophy but also some sort of reduction process are needed for a research to be called phenomenological.

### **Pastoral Need for Structured Reduction**

I agree with Finlay’s premises. In spite of my struggle with the essentializing tendency that the Husserlian idea of reduction induced, I still think that the intellectual process of reduction can yield sound methodology for qualitative research when it is modified with non-essentializing strategies. I argue that structured reduction can be a strategy that supports a pastoral theological reflection that can provide the insight, structure and ethical guidelines for practical theological research.

The need for structured reduction is there because pastoral theology that cares for the living web needs to be sensitized to power differentials as it reflects on the

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<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Smith, Paul Flowers and Michael Larkin. *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Marlene Cohen, David Kahn, and Richard Steeves. *Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research: A Practical Guide for Nurse Researchers*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Finlay, 43. In her survey of phenomenological philosophy, she embraces a wide range of philosophers: she includes not only Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, whom most phenomenologists would include in their camp, but also Hans-Georg Gadamer, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Martin Buber and Eugene Gendlin, who may or may not regard themselves as phenomenologists. Thus she is giving a large space for the philosophical underpinning, which gives room for both currents of research method development.

vulnerability and the divine presence in lived experiences, for the pastoral commitment to both the divine and the persons entrusted in our care is to be honored. Structured reduction is inevitably based on analytic induction, which is the epistemological element that Pascale points out to be the core of Cartesian dualism.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, there is a powerful role that it can play in pastoral theology; it is capable of checking on the basic power limits in persons. As a pastoral counselor, I am trained to observe the power dynamic between my clients and me. The pastoral counselors' ethic of "Do no harm" reaches far beyond the passive stance of standing away from any possibly harming situation. Let's think how we do our safety assessment, for example. We know very well that vulnerable information like suicidality and abuse history usually does not naturally present itself to the counselor: we go through analytic induction to check the risk factors in our head and check it out with our clients. This is a delicate process that combines analytic induction and intuitive empathy, while the counselor holds on to the therapeutic rapport that may or may not assure the counselor access to such vulnerable information. Empathy alone does not accomplish this process: we use our heightened critical, analytic thinking with a clear commitment to protect the vulnerability of the client. Such analytic induction is temporary, because this safety assessment will be immersed quickly in the context of relationality.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, this temporary analytic induction is powerfully pastoral in its commitment.

Thus analytic induction is a valid tool for pastoral theology that explores any relationship and vulnerability related issues. Pastoral theologians' sensitivity to power

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<sup>29</sup> Pascale, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Such temporary analytic induction is similar to the notion of strategic essentialism that Gayatri Spivak articulated in her 1985 article, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." See, *The Spivak Reader*, eds. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (New York: Routledge, 1996), 214.

issues can welcome such reduction processes as an expression of their relational and ethical commitment. Instead of losing the epoché, I propose to revise how we understand the bracket in phenomenological process.

### **Toward a Pastoral Theological Phenomenology: Revising the Bracket**

To revise our understanding of bracketing, I draw wisdom from feminist qualitative researchers. Out of their search for emancipating knowledge, they found that the positionality of the researcher has much to do with the resulting emancipating narratives that the qualitative research can produce. During the late 1960s and 1970s, feminists found that various marginalized groups of women had no voice represented in social science; they developed standpoint theory, which aspires to build knowledge based on the vision and knowledge of oppressed women, which is researched by looking at the lived experiences from their point of view. It was a movement that sprang out of feminists' frustration about the dominance of the male-centered theories that failed to take women's experience into account. Joey Sprague explains:

Standpoint theorists reject positivism's pretense of creating a view from nowhere in favor of the postulate that subjects are specific, located in a particular time and place. This locatedness gives access to the concrete world. Thus a knower has a particular vantage point with regard to the object. Knowing is not relative, as radical constructivists maintain; it is partial, local, and historically specific.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the prominent achievement of this theory is its epistemology that "requires us to place women at the center of the research process."<sup>32</sup> According to feminist standpoint scholar Patricia Hill Collins, the credibility of the knowledge produced by the

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<sup>31</sup> Joey Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 41.

<sup>32</sup> Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, 56.

standpoint theory depends on women's concrete experiences,<sup>33</sup> which resonates with a phenomenological commitment to understand the lived experiences. This theory pushes the researcher to move closer to the experience of the research participants by aligning his or her perspective with that of the participants. By doing this, the powerless are identified with and painstakingly sought after with central importance attached to their knowledge to empower them. However, in my opinion, this approach lacks sensitivity to the power claim of this assumption. This assumption that the researcher can take the perspective or understand the perspective of the participants, by standing where the participants usually stand, already buys into the self-other or the knower-known dichotomy that stems from or easily leads to essentialism. When this theory was developed, it was appropriate for the feminist researcher's urgent need to construct epistemology based on women's experience, but the self-other dualism was not overcome. However, standpoint theory's contribution is clear: it is very important to position the researcher in the appropriate place. The dualistic thinking that standpoint theory takes up is that between the marginalized and the powerful, which led them to focus on saving the marginalized voice. Does this dualistic thinking stand the test of time? I propose that the power dynamics between the researcher and the research participants can have many more nuances.<sup>34</sup>

Scholars who are coming from marginalized communities to study their own communities, such as indigenous and postcolonial scholars, experience such nuances in

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<sup>33</sup> Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 56

<sup>34</sup> While many powerful, liberating practices were borne out of this line of binary thinking, I contend that the dualism of the oppressor and the oppressed also has its limit. In my own country Korea, I have seen people who saw themselves as one of the *minjung*, the subjects of *minjung* theology, a liberation theology rooted in Korea, rising up to power but failing to become the liberating voice. I think such failure has much to do with such binary thinking: those who criticized the oppressor often do not know how to be both powerful and non-oppressive.



more depth. Consider the point where indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach finds herself standing: she understands that her research of indigenous methodology is located within the Western academy, and by simply doing research she stands between two worlds with different epistemologies. As she is from, and is looking into, her own community of indigenous people, she notices that this is where, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the word “‘research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words”<sup>35</sup> in their vocabulary, as it is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism.”<sup>36</sup> Kovach notes, “indigenous contributors to this book cite the risks of bringing cultural knowledges into Western research spaces, and I, too, found myself anxious about the misinterpretations, appropriations, and dismissals that often accompany indigenous ways of knowing within the academy.”<sup>37</sup> Such ambivalence and anxiety about the standpoint of the researcher is what got missed in Swinton and Mowat’s work that describes how qualitative research methodology can be used as a possible tool for practical theological reflection. This ambivalent, anxious position that these qualitative researchers would occupy can be translated into that of “native informant” in postcolonial feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak’s language. As Sourayan Mookerjee makes clear, Spivak “does not claim to speak for the native informant or for the subaltern, nor does she claim to occupy ‘their perspective,’ whatever that might be.”<sup>38</sup> However, her understanding of native informant is what I personally know to be a role that I often assumed in my academic formation

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<sup>35</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London: Zed Books, 2012), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Tuhiwai Smith, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 12.

<sup>38</sup> Sourayan Mookerjee, “Native Informant as Impossible Perspective: Information, Subalternist Deconstruction and Ethnographies of Globalization,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 40, no. 2 (May 2003): 133-34.

process.<sup>39</sup> Native informant is originally an ethnographic term that describes the native who translates and interprets his or her own cultures to present it to the ethnography researchers to aid their research. Native informant is therefore regarded with utmost importance by the researcher, while denied any autobiographical account. Spivak notices, “He (and occasionally she) is a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe.”<sup>40</sup> In this process, the native informant is needed but gets foreclosed, because for the ethnographer as the subject to have the knowledge of the native as the object, the other had to be regarded as having the form of an absolute object, which could not be achieved when the ambivalent subjectivity of the native informant is acknowledged by the ethnographer in the in-between space. Borrowing from the Jacques Lacan’s interpretation of Freudian language of psychoanalysis, the native informant undergoes “foreclosure”<sup>41</sup> in the Western psyche, not remembered and thus erased. This native informant’s behavior is ambivalent both toward the researching and to the researched. This may have much to do with the negative energy associated with the word research, a “dirty” word according to Smith, probably because the native informant’s ambivalence easily caused the sense of betrayal and anger in those researched. Nevertheless, this ambivalence that causes foreclosure in the Western researcher’s psyche points at the dangerous power that the native informant holds over the researchers, in the same way that the dangerous, inadmissible desires of the unconscious hold much power over the conscious in psychodynamic formulations.

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<sup>39</sup> For example, some of the narratives I produced for my feminist classes often contained such native informant’s information that I used to gain attention on my work.

<sup>40</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>41</sup> Foreclosure, an English translation of *forclusion* in French, is Lacan’s translation of Freudian term *Verwerfung*, which Lacan introduces in his article, “On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis,” which contains seminars given during the academic year of 1955-1956.

Spivak is quick to point out that “increasingly, there is the self-marginalizing or self-consolidating migrant or postcolonial masquerading as a ‘native informant.’”<sup>42</sup> Risking her accusation of joining this masquerade, I nonetheless see that the position of the native informant cannot help but be the position that a qualitative researcher inevitably takes to a certain degree, if he or she is studying an “other” that has some similarity to the researcher.

The inner dynamic of the native informant is well characterized by the concept of mimicry that Homi Bhabha presents. Colonial mimicry is the colonized person’s “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost, but not quite,”<sup>43</sup> the same as the colonizer. Reflecting the struggle of ambivalence that Kovach articulates, ambivalence between “almost the same” and “not quite” centers on the structure of mimicry, because mimicry is a complex strategy that the colonized implement to appropriate characteristics of the colonizer into the self of the colonized. The mimicking colonized person tries to transform himself/herself into the image of the colonizer as a way to gain some of the power that belonged to the colonizer as an “almost the same” people. On the other hand, such mimicry is also “the sign of the inappropriate, ...a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers.”<sup>44</sup> Mimicry thus functions also as a mockery, providing a disturbing self-reflection that the colonizer is forced to look into. The native informant researcher who functions within the academy at which indigenous people gaze with loathing learns and adapts to the given norm of epistemology that had contributed to

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<sup>42</sup> Spivak, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994 reprinted in 2010), 122.

<sup>44</sup> Bhabha, 122-23.

the objectifying project of the colonial power in the past. Thus this researcher inevitably functions through the dynamic of mimicry from a postcolonial perspective. It is a morally painful stance to take to recognize one's identity with such a derogatory term, but once such an inner dynamic is recognized, the lens through which the research project is performed can have so much more clarity and focus, as discussed below.

Such a postcolonial person, who admits the mimicry dynamic within the self, is standing in the interstitial space, where the binary of the colonizer and colonized, self and other, the settler and indigenous, the researcher and the participants become a both/and and neither/nor at the same time through this ambivalent dynamic. Interstitial space is a problematic space where an "in-between reality" forms where the one standing in this space forms "hybridity, a difference within."<sup>45</sup> In spite of, or maybe because of, the ambivalent knowledge that this person forms standing in this space, looking into both the colonizer and the colonized, or any other binary structures, this person develops uncomfortable interstitial intimacy with the both/and and the neither/nor reality. For the native informant researcher to be more authentic, relational and power-sensitive, the researcher needs to be located in this interstitial space. This way, with the intimate knowledge of the differences within and on either side of the interstitial space, the researcher will be more equipped to keep the fluctuating power within herself and outside of herself in check. If the bracketing was suggested in phenomenology as a way to check on the preconceptions of the researcher, I suggest that the bracket is exactly the interstitial space the researcher needs to reflect on, with a commitment to look into the power-dynamic within this space.

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<sup>45</sup> Bhabha, 19.

Therefore, the revision that I suggest of the reduction process of phenomenology is the revision of the bracket. As a mathematical concept, the bracket is limiting the scope of the prioritized actions that the phenomenologists take. For example, in a simple problem set,  $7x(2+4)$ , we understand that we are to first focus on  $2+4$ , which is placed within the bracket, thus prioritizing such action before engaging  $7x$ . Therefore, the bracket blocks the application of  $7x$  to protect the phenomenon of  $2+4$ . However, the history of the development of phenomenology has shown that lived experience does not have the clear-cut division between the phenomenon and the phenomenologist as the mathematician and the math problem may have.<sup>46</sup> Rather, for a research project to avoid becoming power-blind, the subjectivity of the phenomenologists and the research participants need to be accounted for. Taking into consideration both the wisdom of standpoint theory and the postcolonial self-reflection that those scholars so bravely have done, I suggest that the phenomenological epoché be achieved by placing such postcolonial researchers right in the bracket and requiring the researcher to self-reflect throughout the research and name his or her findings as results of such self reflective bracketing. As we have noticed, the subjectivity of the researcher cannot guarantee a consistently functioning bracket to any phenomenon, and thus she or he is unable to produce any kind of objectivity. Yet the phenomenological reduction process provides a disciplined way of subjugating one's perspective under the microscope for examination, which allows a rigorous self-reflection that can help keep in check to an appropriate degree the various power dynamics within the researcher and in relation to participants and their context. Such a bracket, as it includes the researcher, is constantly under

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<sup>46</sup> Even this binary concept begins to collapse in mathematics, as it moves into theorizing quantum physics.

examination as the researcher standing in the bracket tries to understand the phenomenon and its participants and context from such a bracketed point of view, thus utilizing the interstitial intimacy as the researcher's strength, yet distancing from such intimacy that can blur the power differentials.

The postcolonial researcher standing in the bracket possesses the interstitial intimacy and understanding that allows the researcher to see more than the binary world that expands around the researcher. Just as there is fluctuation of power in the hybridity of this person, the lived experience seen from the bracket also has the fluctuation that complexifies the experience. When this fluctuating complexity is perceived as part of the "living web," such research touches the web in many different layers and tugs the web from many different points. Thus this pastoral theological phenomenology with postcolonial perspective understands its research activity as witnessing the lived experience as it is located and impacting the living web in complex ways.

## **Research Design**

### *Interview Structure*

The revised phenomenological bracket is worked into the in-depth interview structure so that my reflexivity is as an important part of the interview as the narratives of the research participants. The following shows how. The research participants were interviewed twice. During the first interview, the participants were asked questions about their relationships with the Bible and how they experience changes motivated by the Bible reading. Then, I sorted through the contents of this interview using the revised phenomenological bracket, reflecting on both participant's narrative and various dynamics that happened in my self as the interviewer to bracket my inner dynamics from

the participant's narrative. Then, I wrote a short letter addressed to the interviewee that shared my reflection on the interview. I brought this letter to the participant in the second interview, which began as I read this reflection letter to the participants and asked them to reflect on their experience of hearing it. This process allowed the participants to clarify their thoughts on their experience, correct any misconception I may have about them, and find any elements of their experiences that were not reflected on during the first interview. It also found that the reading of this letter was in itself a newly introduced experience that generated fresh relational dynamics that enriched the data.

### *The Reflection Letter*

The short letter that I brought back to the second interview served some other purposes apart from clarification of information. First of all, the process of letter writing served as a reflective way to sort out various reactions that I had as the interviewer to the interviewee and to the content of the interview. Each interview provoked various intellectual, emotional, and spiritual responses in the researcher, which pointed to various layers of the experiences. The letter writing process allowed me to sort out the intersubjective reality that the interview process incited. I traced any elements that provoked strong emotions to identify the source within and outside the interview.

The format of the reflection as a letter was intentional: it acknowledged the relationship that formed in this encounter. The interview itself was sustained through the empathic presence I provided as a researcher and a pastor, especially as I was identified by the pastors who introduced me to the interviewees as a pastor and as the section on the limit of confidentiality in the informed consent form for this research identified me as a pastor. The interviewees knew of my pastoral identity, and there were dynamics that

resulted from such knowledge, which will be explored later. Because of such apparent relational dynamics, I decided to make my pastoral identity play a role through this letter writing. Through the first interviews, I found that most of the interviewees entrusted their information to me more so as a pastor than as a researcher, often revealing vulnerable information as if our meeting was a pastoral visit. I had to respect this trust with pastoral sensitivity, which needed to be reflected in this letter. This pastoral sensitivity meant that this letter needed to be relational, empathic, and respectful to the spirituality reflected in the narrative. In other words, this letter needed to be used to create a space with emotional safety. One way I could convey my respect for the spirituality of interviewees was to make sure that I have the right language to describe their spirituality: because spiritual dynamics could be very subjective, I especially utilized this letter as a way to identify the interviewee's spiritual strength so that I can check my perception with them. Therefore, the letter was written using my conceptualization of their spiritual experiences and the interviewees were asked to verify whether those descriptions resonated with their experience.

### *Research Journal*

I also kept journals for my experiences right before and after the interviews as a way to sort out my own inner dynamics surrounding the interaction. These journals and the letter function as tools to check on my subjectivity as a researcher and an observation of the postcolonial bracket itself. By identifying various thoughts and emotions that have potential to influence the interview, this journaling process helped me to bracket out those thoughts and emotion before the interview. One other important element processed through this journaling was identifying my own countertransference in the interview by



quickly noting those inner dynamics right after the interview. The analysis of these journals and letter allows me to keep track of the relational context that I as the interviewer formed with the interviewee and let myself go through a rigorous postcolonial phenomenological reduction process as I have proposed in this chapter.

### *Unexpected Data Sets*

As the interview continued, I began to receive unexpected gifts from the interviewees, such as Bible study notes that they have produced, hand-written Bibles with dates of the transcriptions, newsletters with their interviews elsewhere, and a published autobiography. Written permission for use was received from the interviewee who gave me his Bible study notes, and verbal permission was given by all interviewees to allow me to utilize the published material and pictures of the hand-written Bible.

### *Research Participants*

For this research, I wanted to interview somewhat seasoned Presbyterian Christians, so that there would be an increased chance that the interviewees can identify various changes that they experienced in their history of interacting with the Bible. To have access to such Christians, I initially had to depend on the pastoral staff of the congregations that I approached. I limited my parameter to Korean American Churches within Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to have some contextual limitation among the participants. The denominational background allows me to assume the centrality of scripture within the congregational life. The two congregations I selected also show in their website that the members are encouraged to participate in small group ministry(구역모임). These groups are intentionally formed to foster supportive relationships among members. The gathering consists of small worship service and a

Bible study. With such structure given within the congregation, I expected the interviewees will at least have the communal expectation to value the Bible.

I interviewed 6 Korean American adults from two congregations. Three of them were Korean speaking, and two of them English-speaking Korean Americans. One of them was comfortable in both Korean and English, having immigrated to the States in her high school years. Half of the research participants were contacted through the recommendation of the pastors of each congregation. The pastors were asked to recommend a person who had read the Bible with some zeal (“성경을 열심히 읽어 오신 분들”) to ensure that the interviewees do have history of interacting with the Bible. The rest of the participants were recruited through the snow-ball method, asking participants to recommend fitting persons for the next interviews.

### *Data Analysis*

Finlay describes the process of engaging the collected data as “dwelling,”<sup>47</sup> a process of taking time to immerse in the raw data to discover the layered meanings. Dwelling has rich theological connotations, such as mutual indwelling, resonance, and making life, which points to its life-giving and relational quality. This is an empathic process in which the researcher lingers around the experiences of the interviewees, namely the lifeworld in phenomenological term, to observe the meanings emerging out of such interaction with the data. Thanks to the way the interview was designed, the preliminary dwelling happened through and after the transcribing of the first interview. To produce the reflective letter to the interviewee, the initial coding and analysis had to be done so that those themes could be reflected upon to be brought to the interviewee.

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<sup>47</sup> Finlay, 229.

After the second interview, each transcribed interview, the letter to the interviewee, and the reflection journal were entered into the data analysis program NVivo 10 to be coded and analyzed to structure the whole analysis.

The fact that this phenomenological study is part of a practical theological study helps expand the data analysis to deeper level. The analysis of the data will be woven into conversation with the voices from disciplines that will be presented in the ensuing chapters.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DESCRIPTIVE TASK:**

#### **THE RESULTS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY**

Because the interviews were conducted with a loose structure to induce exploration of the subject in depth, each interview had a unique narrative structure. To provide contexts for the detailed elements of the narrative that will be put into conversation with theories in the later chapters, this chapter aims to present the overall summary of the narratives in my own language. Even though this chapter is aiming to present the data from the interview, the act of summarizing the narratives already reflects my interpretation.

First, the history and situation of the interviewees will be introduced to provide a context in which their stories unfold. Then the overall characteristics of their relationships with the Bible will be presented. After that, several themes that emerged in the narratives will be identified. These themes will be categorized under changes, self, spiritual knowing, and pastor.

#### **History and Situation of the Interviewees**

“Mina” is in her 40’s. She is a mother of two teenage boys. She came to the States after the birth of her second son, who was born blind. Not having been able to find a proper treatment in Korea, she came to the States to stay with her sister and to arrange an eye surgery for her son. After the surgery, which was unsuccessful, she found that her son was also deaf as the result of the exhaustive examination that the medical team performed. Probably due to the double disability, her son demonstrated various behaviors that were evaluated as autistic. What began as a trip to the States for a medical treatment

evolved into immigration of her family, including her parents and her two sons, as her family struggled to help her son with disabilities. Her husband was left behind in Korea to financially support his family. During the last decade, Mina has seen many ups and downs in her life. While in the States, her father who came to support her and her sons passed away after battling cancer, and her sister lost her husband in an accident. In the midst of such difficulties, her blind son had gone through several surgeries and gained hearing on one side, now attending a residential school for the children on weekdays. Overcoming many challenges that her unique life situation provided her, she has spoken in many churches and organizations testifying to God's faithfulness throughout those challenging life events. She has published an autobiographical account of her family's life, appeared in Korean TV shows, and written articles for one of the major newspapers in Korea.

“Henry” is in his late 50's and immigrated to the States about 15 years ago. Before immigration, he was a high school English teacher in South Korea. He and his wife own two beauty supply stores; each of them manages one. He converted to Christianity four years ago, after having spent his life adhering to the moral principles rooted in Confucianism, such as consistency in language and behavior (언행일치). His mother frequented the Buddhist temple for her own peace of mind. Such peace of mind was very important to his wife who used to attend church in her youth but who had searched for different ways to gain peace, including Shamanistic spiritual means for her family's blessings. Henry says there was no place around him that did not have a paper amulet (부적), including all rooms in his house and their cars.

About 4 years ago, someone left a CD that contained recording of a sermon and hymns in the beauty shop that Henry's wife managed. When she was stuck in traffic in her long commute, she listened to this CD and found it soothing. This led her to attend a church, but in her fear of getting lost, she asked Henry to drive her back and forth. For several weeks, he would wait for her in the church parking lot, listening to the radio and reading books. Then one particular day, he felt curious about the church, and the following week, he attended the service with his wife. Ever since then, he had been an active member of this church, now serving in various capacities including group Bible study leader and the church choir manager.

His life style change after the conversion was noticeable. He states that his customers recognize changes in his face; and he hasn't raised his voice in anger within his household. Meditation on the Bible became an ongoing activity even at his workplace. He notes the remarkable difference he observed in himself when his father passed away recently. About 10 years ago, when his mother passed away in her 80's, he cried and wailed on his way home to Korea and throughout the funeral. However, this time, he found himself at peace, in spite of the sadness that comes with loss, because of his belief that his father will be in a good place, thanks to the changes that happened in Henry's life.

"Amy" is a mom of two sons and in her late thirties. She came to the States with her single father and her younger sister during her high school years. While in high school, her closest friend invited her to the church where her friend's father was pastoring. As a college student, she participated in a campus ministry for Korean speaking students, where she responded to an altar call. Amy marks that moment as that

of her personal salvation. She met her husband at college and married him while in college.

When Amy's family first came to the United States, her college-educated father who used to translate literature written in English into Korean had to grab onto any menial job he could hold, including cleaning buildings, shelving in stores, and so on. She remembers her father to be quite anxious during those times, worrying excessively about his daughters' safety and academic performance even while they were doing pretty well at school. Amy developed resentment toward her father. This resentment eventually became the very thing of which she repented at the moment of her salvation. In spite of everything, she has been a good first daughter of her family, making sure to take care of her aging father even after her marriage.

Amy is a calm and thoughtful spirit. She wishes to have a passionate spirituality, but the gem of her spirituality seems to lie in her efforts to have integrity in her deeds and to be thoughtfully relational to people around her. She bashfully admits that she has not consistently read the Bible for a while, yet she is able to identify powerful moments in her life in which the Bible spoke so very clearly to her.

"Oneil" is in his late 80s and has spent a little less than half of his life in the States. While his family had been in Manchuria during the period Korea was under Japanese colonization, his life story starts in Seon Cheon (선천), Pyung An Buk Do (평안북도) North Korea. His grandfather was one of the first elders elected within the Northern Presbyterian Church in Korea, which does not exist anymore due to the Communist regime in North Korea that suppressed all forms of religion. Before the division of the Korean Peninsula, Protestant Christianity had stronger presence in what is

presently North Korea, with Seon Cheon and Pyung Yang (평양) being the historical center of the Northern Presbyterian Church. Oneil prides himself as the first-son offspring (장손) of his grandfather. As his grandfather had been part of one of the decolonializing movements against the Japanese regime, Oneil's family receives Korean government's monetary rewards that commemorate Oneil's grandfather's patriotic contribution to the nation's founding.

As Oneil grew up in Seon Cheon, his father was serving the church as the choir conductor and his mother as a Sunday school teacher. Both of them faithfully served the church, but unfortunately his father passed away at a very young age. His mother who was in her late 20's wanted to receive her late husband's inheritance to move to another place, but her mother-in-law refused to give her the share because she feared Oneil's mother would marry into another family. Oneil's family owned enormous amount of land and her marrying into another family would have been a great loss to his family. Out of this struggle his young mother entered fasting and praying to ask God to change her mother-in-law's mind. After many days, she concluded with what she perceived as a clear instruction from God that she would be taken care of no matter what. She decided to learn how to sew from another widow in her village and began to earn money by sewing clothes for the neighbors. During Oneil's high school years, the Japanese regime withdrew and the communist regime began in North Korea. He remembers the pastor preaching, "Go to the south, unless you are prepared to be a martyr." Oneil's family, as a massive land-owner, decided to move to South Korea, sneaking out of their homeland during the dark night, because the land-owners were stripped of their ownership and persecuted as the enemies of the communist revolution.



When his family arrived in South Korea, all family members had to participate in economic activities: his mother by sewing clothes, Oneil, who had learned to play trumpet at his school band, by playing trumpet music in night clubs, his elementary school age sister by cooking and selling food on a cart in a market place. Through such effort his family was able to rent a studio on the third floor of a house and survive in the South.

When the Korean War broke out, Oneil was on a concert tour with his high school band teacher, who was being recruited into the army to conduct the marching bands. At the outbreak of the war, Oneil, his band friends and his teacher were already in their army uniform and were drafted into the army band, without a chance to let their families know. Oneil says he survived the war by God's grace, attributing what he sensed as God's protection to God's answering his mother's prayers.

In his young adult years after the war was over, he worked various jobs using his musical skills and others. At church, he gained chances to substitute for the choir conductor, which developed into his life-long ministry, both in Korean and in the States.

When he first immigrated to the States in the mid 70's, he worked at a factory that made electronic machine parts. His detailed attention to the manufacturing process and delicate workmanship gained the attention of the managers and factory owner. He was promoted rapidly into positions with bigger responsibilities. Such attention to accuracy extended to various part of his life: his work, choir conducting, and even into his spiritual practice of copying the Bible by hand. For about last twenty years, he had devoted two or more hours a day to copy the Bible with his hands, with the goal to finish transcribing the Bible once each year. He has finished copying the whole Bible nineteen times and

grieves the lost opportunity to finish the last twentieth Bible, as he developed health conditions that prevent him from attempting to do the twentieth Bible.

“Daniel” is a young Korean American man in his early twenties who just got married a couple of months ago. He grew up in a Korean American Presbyterian church attending the service offered in English to the second generation Korean Americans. Even though this ministry was nested in a Presbyterian church, the leaders of this ministry led this group in a pronouncedly Pentecostal way, utilizing and encouraging the manifestation of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and prophecies. As a child, Daniel had seen the relational turmoil within his family as his parents divorced. Daniel’s mother who had immigrated to the States in her childhood attended the Korean service in Daniel’s church, as her older siblings were part of the same congregation. Probably experiencing some discomfort in the first generation Korean American culture of the Korean speaking congregation, she attended the church quietly, mostly serving in roles that do not require engaging others, such as cooking or serving in other ways. As Daniel grew up in this church, he also took up similar roles as a child, making deliberate effort to serve others, maybe through bringing water to the tables in the cafeteria, or maybe through taking the dirty paper plates to the trash after people are done eating their lunch. Such attitude of service continues to be part of Daniel’s identity in his adulthood, even as he takes up various leadership roles within the church. Daniel gained much weight after his family went through the divorce. After the divorce his father estranged himself from Daniel and his sister for several years. Daniel did not share much about his pain from this period, but some of his emotional difficulties might have led to obesity, with which he has struggled much. Daniel claims that he survived those difficult years with God’s help

and in the company of the small group of Christian friends. In his high school years, following advice from his cousin, he joined the school's football team, training himself rigorously. On weekends, he devoted himself to the service at church, participating in the praise team and providing other leadership. Daniel presents himself as a young man whose total focus is on God's glory. He carefully chooses his vocabulary to reflect his piety. He carries himself with refined demeanors. His narratives are also carefully structured to highlight what he understands to be God's doing in his life, even at the moment when unexpected questions are asked.

"Kathy" is also in her early twenties. She has known that she is gifted in her interaction with children, which made her pursue education to become a teacher. However, the more she got trained, the more she found herself disliking the field. The interviews happened while she was still discerning her path, weighing between her passion for children and her deep dislike for the possible future as a teacher in a school system.

Kathy's family also went through divorce, and she states she felt numb when the divorce was in progress during her middle school years. At school, she presented herself as a pleasant and non-belligerent person, so that no one would notice that she was actually having a hard time. She remembers when her attempt to be pleasant was interpreted as stupidity by her friends. She remembers both her resentment and her frustration with the inability to express her anger. She describes her teen-age self as a "ticking bomb," as the emotions she had suppressed would explode from time to time. Now in her twenties, she can express herself much more freely. Her current challenge is

to refine the ways in which to express herself to be most relational to the recipients of her expression.

Kathy is kinetically talented: she is a good choreographer when it comes to creating motions for children's worship services or for children's Christmas musicals. Outside the church, her fondness of movements translated into dancing in clubs when she went through what she calls the "hitting the rock bottom" time. After she felt burned out while serving the Sunday School as a teacher, she left the church for a while and spent the weekend in the clubs. For Kathy, dancing was fun and exhilarating, but it did not translate into feeling satisfaction. She noticed a hole in her heart that did not get filled.

Even while she was "hitting the rock bottom," she now noticed, God loved her dearly. God's saving grace was found in her friend, an old friend from elementary school years, with whom she reconnected in the club. Somehow, together they came to have conversations about their sense of dissatisfaction. Such conversations slowly began to happen in different contexts, moving out of the club: though initially at the club, later they talked at a bar, at a museum, and at a coffee shop. Now their relationship has transformed into that of "accountability buddies," both of them attending church and talking about the Bible in their conversations.

Kathy's experience from her teenage years and during her clubbing days translates into a deep empathy with the high school students at her church. Her attention goes to those youth that are usually seen as "trouble-makers," as she can see the challenges they face in their lives. She also finds herself in the midst of great community among the group of Sunday school teachers, which makes her feel secure to a great degree.

### **Preliminary Description of the Relationships with the Bible**

Each interview was wonderfully unique. Each interviewee was at a different point in his or her faith journey and developmental process. As each interviewee had gone through different life experiences and was at a different point in his or her faith journey, the relationships each had with the Bible looked also quite distinctive.

The Bible is something that Mina has soaked in throughout her whole life. In her family of origin, she has seen her grandparents and parents preaching and teaching the Bible within her family. She has served in every possible capacity in the church community, including choirs, Bible study leaders, Sunday School teacher, mission group leader, and so on. For Mina, the Bible is like the air she breathes. It is always there. Then when a situation happens, fitting Bible verses float into her memories enabling her to meditate on them or share them with others. Constant meditation and studies, along with her formation in a devout Christian family, allowed her to have such an asset.

However, the most tangible and strong bond with the Bible formed after she gave birth to her second son who was born with blindness. She had gone through intensive questioning, a “life-and-death wrestling” with God, to find help and meaning in her experience of her son. After she experienced a perspective-changing encounter with God’s promise in the Bible, which I will describe later under the heading of change, she continued to wrestle with challenges in her life. The Bible is a spring of liveliness that constantly strengthens her. Currently, she facilitates a Bible study with a group of women in their thirties, which has enriched her biblical engagement significantly. She finds a great amount of encouragement from the ways in which other women wrestle to relate the meaning they find in the Bible to their challenging life situations, as they share together

their struggles and small triumphs of the week. Preparing for that Bible study meeting with a hope to enrich the participants' lives, as well as listening to each participant's stories, provide Mina an "exhilarating sense of joy" as she finds how God's big puzzle of life gets pieced together, interweaving each person's life and the Bible. In her experience, the relationships built through such intimate sharing are the very context in which God transforms people: she quotes a Proverbs passage (27:17) "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another," which, to Mina, signifies the relational dynamic that produces growth and transformation in the members of her Bible study group.

For Henry, the Bible is the source of his identity. When Henry began to attend the church, he began to make notes of the sermons and meditate on them throughout the week. As a former high school teacher who was known for his excellent skills in documentation, Henry created documents that summarized each week's sermon with the message he extracted and plan of application to his own life, which turned into a sizable booklet that he had given to his pastors and to me. However, this is not a simple matter of documentation only. In his church, the small groups, whether the geographical groups (구역모임), gendered groups, or age groups, use the questions based on each week's sermon prepared by the senior pastor as the study guide for the small group Bible studies. As Henry was elected to be a small group Bible study leader, he had been rigorously studying the Bible passages throughout his workdays, meditating on the passages in depth. This depth becomes deeper each day; as he comes back to the same passage over and over again with an eye to excavate more. And he does not get disappointed in such encounters. In fact, his analytical skills that he has had as a former teacher are fully in use when he studies the Bible, allowing him to find layer after layer as he explores the Bible.

As those findings feed into his search for meanings and integrity, he enjoys such process immensely.

Amy is very shy about her relationship with the Bible because she has not regularly meditated on the Bible these days. However, as she is trying to discern God's will in her career, she is attentively listening to any biblical message that comes her way, through her own devotion and through sermons. As she struggles with her frustration at her work place due to her boss' stifling management style, she wants to discern God's will to see if she should relocate to some other place. When she consults the Bible, the biblical messages in which she tries to hear God's voice tell her to be "patient." Her interpretation of patience reveals how she integrates her personality, her sense of morality and her understanding of the Great commandment (Matthew 29:19-20; Acts 1:8) to be Jesus' witness and make disciples. She has a sense that her current workplace was God-given, as she has searched for work that allows her to take Sundays off so she could go to church. Thus, she thinks hard what other intentions God may have for her. Since she hears patience to be God's message through her interaction with the Bible, she figures her own patient presence at that workplace actually can accomplish what God intended, because she had from the very beginning maintained integrity in her work ethics and relationships with her co-workers with an expectation that God would be revealed through her to the non-Christians around her. If anyone is interested in God behind her integrity, she can introduce Christ to that person, she says. As a calm and somewhat introverted person, she thinks this is her way of making disciples.

For Oneil, the Bible is the core of his pious spiritual practice. For the last twenty years, he had copied the Bible into a notebook and had accomplished this task of

handwriting the whole Bible nineteen times. In his calculation, it takes about two hours and a half each day to copy the Bible once a year, which is roughly a tenth of twenty-four hours, a daily tithe in his mind. He humbly says, two and a half hours seems quite small but in actuality it was so much more difficult than it seems. This dedication of time-tithing becomes a gigantic task; not to belittle the regular two and a half hour daily commitment, which is quite extraordinary in itself, it becomes even more significant when the family travels or when he is somehow kept away from the writing desk. Once he was hospitalized for ten days: he reports the time after the hospitalization as one of the most challenging times in his journey of handwriting the Bible because when he finally came home he found that he had to devote great amount of time to catch up for the time lost during the hospitalization. With a goal to finish the whole Bible each year, the process of handwriting the Bible becomes his own way of wrestling with the Bible (May I invoke the image of Jacob wrestling with God's angel in Genesis?), a way to gain his name from God. When the wrestling happens with a sacred text, his respect for the holy is shown in the accuracy of the texts copied. He copies the Bible word by word to maintain high accuracy and when he makes a mistake he cuts out a white label into a piece that covers the misspelled word precisely to maintain an even surface for the written words. He uses this delicate process, because the regular whiteout would create a bumpy surface that is disrespectfully conspicuous. Through this pious practice, he knows he is accomplishing something extraordinary, yet in front of God he wants to be as humble as possible. His desire to be humble creates a dilemma, since he also feels a sense of accomplishment. This dilemma slips out in the conversation: he wavers back and forth between "this is nothing to be proud of" and "what else can I take pride in but this?"



This practice, which he started in his mid sixties, was originally something he was drawn into when he heard over a Korean Christian radio station a challenge to Christians to handwrite the whole Bible, with a reward announced to those who take on the challenge. Oneil states that when he began, it was neither out of piety nor out of any other lofty goal: someone mentioned that he would never be able to finish the task, which made him want to prove himself as capable of finishing this task. After he finished his first book, which was celebrated with a prize from the radio station and his family members, he decided that he wants to write one for each of his family members, one for each of his daughters and his wife. Then at one funeral, he found that people laid a Bible with the deceased in the casket. He wondered how wonderful it would be to have the Bible he copied himself in his own casket. Now there are several people in his life who have copies of his handwritten Bible, including his relatives and the pastors at his church. It is his legacy that he wants his offspring and his community to inherit from him.

Having written so many copies of the Bible, Oneil describes his writing process as something similar to “addiction”: it is almost unbearable not to write. It is a way of being in the moment, a focused task that requires attention to details. He finds new things each time he writes. The process of piously copying the Bible indeed became part of him. At present, he has stopped doing this due to health reasons, but he desires to come back to this task. However, such desire is more like an expression of his grief: he is slowly letting go of this process that has long been part of his life.

Daniel’s relationship with the Bible is very personal: the Bible is the reservoir of God’s loving voice that encourages him endlessly. Daniel’s relationship with the Bible intensified when he had the experience of a radical change in himself while playing the

drum in a retreat. He was a new member of the youth group's praise team but he was struggling with the instrument, unable to improve his skills. After suffering through a first set of praise songs in the particular retreat during which his struggle was obvious, he prayed eagerly for help. During the next set of praise songs, he experienced a surreal intervention of God, making him play the drum with skills that seemed "from out of the world." It was a moment in which he experienced "God working through him", while he felt "emptied" of all his emotional burdens. While that day marked a decisive moment of his experience of God, it also marked an important beginning of a relationship with the Bible. Two of his leaders prophesized that he would find blessings if he repeatedly read three particular books of the Bible. Ever since then, he has eagerly engaged these three books: Proverbs, Galatians, and Ephesians. Such personally designated biblical passages play important roles in his Bible reading. His cousin who had been a consistently supportive figure in his life, had texted him encouraging verses, which he took deeply into his heart. Any Bible verses that are spoken to him personally through another person are to be taken seriously as God's voice, as Daniel believes that God is using this person to say something to him. With such importance given to the relational context in which the Bible passages are given to him, his way of engaging the three books given at his sacred moment provides him a place to come back to repeatedly with an eager heart to listen. As one of the prophecies given directly to him by his leaders was that he would be a man of wisdom, Proverbs, one of the three books given to him plays an ever-important role in his life. Just like the son who is listening to the wise father in the book of Proverbs(Proverb 1:8), Daniel listens to the wise voice in this book with the attention this son would give to his wise father. He regards those sayings as important ingredients for

building his God-given wisdom, which needs to be stored, or “imbedded” in his own self, so that this wisdom will be accessible when God is using him to impart such wisdom to others. Thus, even the harshest saying in Proverbs comes sweet to his soul, as it is simply an ingredient of the Godly wisdom he is building up; thus it is another encouraging voice and a language of love provided for him. As he disciplines himself to read the whole Bible these days, however, he also encounters passages that do not seem to speak directly to him: he says, “There are books in the Bible, that I feel like why am I reading this? What does it have to do with me? Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy, of course, the beginning of Numbers is, man, what does all this mean? What does all this supposed to mean in my life?” He quickly reads through such passages, as part of his spiritual discipline to read the whole Bible, but those parts seem to speak little to him.

Kathy’s relationship with the Bible is a rather newly found one. Through the Bible, she finds a deeply empathizing voice of God. As a young woman in her twenties, she finds it accessible and feasible to do her devotions on a Bible app on her smart phone. Her paradigm-shifting encounter with the Bible happened when this Bible app provided a passage in Matthew 6 (Matthew 6:25-34) just several months before I interviewed her. This passage is still so very fresh in her mind; she can quote the details of the passages as she simply talks about it without looking at the Bible. What touched Kathy’s heart deeply was how directly this passage shows understanding of her very core struggle: she has lots of worries, which are next to impossible to get rid of. This passage tells her to worry only about today, because today’s worries are enough for today. God did not say she should not worry if she trusted God but said God understood how much there is to worry about each day. God’s assurance that Kathy is better than the birds in the air and that God will

thus surely take care of her coupled with such poignantly personalized empathy to generate significant changes in her life after this encounter. Others in her life also confirmed the changes. She looks hopeful; she looks at peace. God demonstrated God's empathy toward her, and this empathy is important to her more than anything. At this point in her life, empathy is Kathy's core value.

### **Themes**

While the individual narratives contain unique stories and themes of their own, there were some common threads. These themes were revealed through the coding process. The coding was done on the transcripts of the interviews, the letters that I wrote to each interviewee, and my reflections as the researcher. While my letters and reflections provided evidence of my interpretations and interactions, the themes are mostly identified in the interview transcripts. Four themes will be summarized to provide a cohesive context of the narratives. These include changes, self and testimony, spiritual epistemology, and pastoral identity. Among these themes, spiritual epistemology will be treated only briefly because it is difficult to summarize. This theme will be more extensively treated in chapter 4.

### **Changes**

I noticed largely two kinds of positive changes in the narratives of the interviewees. While negative changes were not out of the scope of the interview, my interviewees mostly concentrated on the positive changes they experienced, which led me to have more data on positive changes. The first kind is a change in perspective and the second kind is a gradual change, often described by the interviewees as growth, which in

Korean was mostly convey through the context or by words like 성숙함, 변화함, or 자라남. Such growth often seems to happen in a community context.

*Changes in Perspectives: A Piercing Answer to the Wrestling Question*

Sometimes changes were directly motivated by the passages read in the Bible. Those moments are easy to identify and marked by what the person experienced as a precise answer to the question or issue he or she was wrestling with. The questioning or wrestling process, which was often agonizing or soul-draining, had gone on for a while, and the answers that they found in the Bible were unmistakably individualized answers to their questions. This kind of change is not always a mark of concrete behavioral change but a perspective change, although such perspective change also brings about a change in overall attitude that becomes foundational for other behavioral changes.

Mina talks about the time when she found that her blind baby son was also deaf after the eye surgery turned out to be unsuccessful. When she thought that blindness was the only disability her newly born son had, she thought she would be able to take care of him by finding the right teacher and education system. However, when she found that he was also deaf, her world collapsed. She asked, “why me?” She described how she would sit through the early morning prayer meetings, reminding herself of all the wonderful families into which God could have sent her son and asking, “why not them, but me?” At home, wrestling with the challenging reality that her toddler son would present, then in the early morning stubbornly asking “why me?” question every day, she spent agonizing days. The answer came to her through several paths: she heard her inner voice pointing to a verse in Isaiah (Isaiah 43:1), followed by the same text appearing in the form of sermon, then in a praise song. “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” When Mina first heard this passage popping in her head, she said to herself, “I must be hallucinating.” However, as the same passage was repeatedly given to her through different venues, she realized it was God telling her she belonged to God. This was followed by God asking in her mind, “whose is your son?” which, Mina stated, moved her heart. She first answered he was hers. However, when the question persisted she finally realized it was a call to trust God: “I am yours, God, and he is mine. Therefore, he is also yours, God.” This answer tied into the other struggle that she faced when she first gave birth to her son. Back then her initial question was whether she was guilty of some serious sins that deserved such harsh punishment as giving birth to a blind child. Her senior pastor had brought John 9 to her family. To the question that the disciples asked about a man who was born blind, “‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.’ (John 9: 2-3)” Through her son, who belongs to God, God’s work will be revealed. It was a clear answer for Mina’s question that provided purpose in her life.

Sometimes the questions are posed by others. Henry identifies a question given by his pastor: what is the purpose of your life? He remembered his high school years, when he and his friends asked the same question as they tried to figure out their lives ahead. They tried to come up with answers aided by various philosophers’ ideals they studied at school. After having lost this question for a long time, Henry faced this existential question with a renewed sense; yet he was unable to come up with a satisfying answer. The history of his family’s immigration seemed to reveal the obvious answer that he was

living for the sake of his daughter's better education and his family's better future, but he could not grasp what exactly the better future was. When this question was the homework for the Bible study group, he was still in the process of reading the whole Bible (성경통독). He was mesmerized when he arrived at Ecclesiastes in his reading plan. "Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:1)." All the things that he was weighing as a possible purpose of his life were declared vain in the Bible. He describes the moment with excitement: "I banged the desk with my two hands. If I add some exaggerations, I think my face lightened up bright white! That day, every customer who entered my store had to hear my story. I told them, God gave me a clear answer to my question!" "Everything is in vain! Everything is in vain!" This seemingly depressing phrase was exclaimed with so very ironically not-at-all depressive excitement. In this experience, he states, he met God personally, and he found a foundation for his life. Just talking about this incident brought that joy tangibly back to life evidenced in his voice, his face, and through his motions. This moment marked a total transformation in his perspective that eventually brought changes in his attitude and demeanors. His customers, who are mostly African Americans, recognized the positive energy he had and asked him "brother, is there something good going on? You look different!" Looking back, he realizes that he has not shown anger or yelled at home for last four years, which contrasted to how he used to behave at home in the past.

Kathy's encounter with the Matthew 6 passage was definitely a perspective changing experience. While she did not pose what she struggled with as a question, the way that her worries dominated her life was already burdensome. She stated that even right after paying off a monthly bill for her credit card, she would worry about the next

month, for example. These worries may be part of her temperament, but it may also stem from the insecurity she had so deeply experienced in her younger years. She notes that the main reason of her parents' divorce was a financial one, and she finds herself choosing financial security over anything when she imagines a future with a prospective marriage partner. The Matthew 6 passage was a concrete step-by-step answer to her problems with worries. It points to how to worry and how to trust God and why she can trust God in the very language she speaks: the language of empathy. When she was deeply empathized through this passage, her perspectives changed. She can now be peaceful. She can be hopeful.

Amy talks about an encounter with a biblical verse in Deuteronomy 27:16 when she was ardently doing Quiet Time with a monthly devotional publication that has daily devotional passages with a biblical commentary and an anecdotal story. She was participating in a group sharing activity when she encountered it. This verse, "'Cursed be anyone who dishonors father or mother.' All the people shall say, 'Amen!'" stirred a great sense of guilt in her, because it resonated with a struggle she had in her relationship to her father. She notes that she had prayed that her father would relocate to the West Coast from the East Coast after she and her husband moved to the West; after he relocated, she had taken good care of her aging single father. However, after she gave birth to her first son, she found herself being annoyed at her father's frequent visits and requests to help him out with household tasks. The Korean translation of the word "dishonor" has the sense of "treating lightly," which in Amy's mind was a poignantly accurate description of her attitude toward her father. The Deuteronomy passage reminded her that her father was indeed aging and she would not have many more years



to be with him, which made her heart ache. With teary eyes she says, “I don’t want to regret over not having done those little things that he requested, when he is gone. I want to do the best to love him and serve him while he’s around me.”

### *Gradual Changes*

The interviews reveal that a gradual change, a more persistent transformation, usually happens in the context of relationships within communities. While all narratives demonstrate elements of this kind of change, here I will highlight the narratives from three individuals that are mainly characterized by such change.

Mina, who has a long history of serving as Bible study leader in the church, can vouch for such changes. She jokingly exaggerates, “do you want to see miracles? It’s a miracle if you are in a community and don’t experience transformation!” She talks about one of the members who had distanced herself from the group for about a year and then returned. Mina had contacted her every month while she was gone. When she returned, she shared that she was not able to reflect on her own faith journey when she was out of the community. She worshiped every Sunday and even did her daily devotions, but when she lost those with whom to share her thoughts and prayers, she found her spirituality drying out its sources. Spiritual growth was to happen in the context of intimate community where life struggles are shared with peers. According to Mina, what she calls “the most delicious (진국)” base ingredient of meaningful engagement with the Bible is the community in which the experience around the Bible is shared. According to Mina, the challenges that life throws at us should be shared within the intimacy of the relationships guided by the Bible, and there is nothing better than this. She notices many people experiencing growth in her community.

However, that is not to say that Mina is naïvely believing everyone will automatically change. She notices there are people who almost seem to refuse to grow. The challenges that the group members share do not make these people open their minds; rather they throw back sarcasm, refusing to be empathized, saying, “have you experienced what I experienced? You’ll never understand.” She sees behind such stubbornness deep inner wounds these people are not ready to deal with. It is her experience that those who would live by self-pity have a very difficult time changing their perspectives.

Henry also experienced such growth by active participation in a small group. At first, Henry wanted to maintain his spiritual life inconspicuously. Then, three years ago he was given the opportunity to testify about his experience of conversion for an evangelizing event. Up to that point, he had been keeping things low-profile to be in the middle, just as the Korean military saying advises: “don’t be the first, neither be the last.” because in the military training setting, the first one will be always used as the model example which adds more work, while the last will be punished endlessly for being the last one. All of that changed when he was given a couple of important responsibilities this church year. He notes that those responsibilities felt initially very burdensome because they drew much attention to him. However, now he notes that they had provided so much opportunity for growth, such as a sense of responsibility for the community, he found himself developing different layers of reflections on the Bible passages that he would not have considered if the devotion was solely for his own sake. He found himself thinking in the shoes of the members of his group. This empathy became a crucial element in his reflective practice. Such effort was sustained thanks to these continued responsibilities,

which Henry now greatly appreciates. Through his service to the community, the joy and excitement of engaging the Bible are sustained and deepened; through the community, his personal changes are maintained.

For Kathy, teaching the Bible is a profoundly relational act. She contrasts teaching other subjects and teaching the Bible: in teaching other subjects like math or reading, she gets to impart skills that the child needs to know at that point in the curriculum, and then the learning process moves on. In contrast, in teaching the Bible, it is a life-long process, returning to the same point over and over to gain different layers of meaning each time. Kathy says that the study of the Bible does not get exhausted because it involves reflections about and applications to real issues in life. The same biblical passage could be repeatedly revisited throughout one's life and each time it can illuminate different insights. In reflecting back to her own youth, she finds that even the most boring Bible teacher provided her a relational space in which she could grow. The Bible study provided a safe place in which she could relate to her friends in fun ways. The fact that she is now a Sunday school teacher herself signifies that she indeed grew out of what she called the "rock bottom" and now can provide that kind of relational space to her own students.

### **Testimony: Self's Give and Take of Power in front of the Sacred**

The second theme has to do with the self. When one is in relation to the sacred experience, the self seems to have an outlet to take a different power stance. Each interviewee had his or her own way to handle such power invested in the self through the interaction with the sacred. Often this is a theme of arrogance and humbleness, which

fluctuate in a person's narrative in its own unique way. This finding will be engaged more in depth in the next chapter, but some preliminary description is due at this point.

It has just been pointed out that the community is a significant context for spiritual growth experienced in relation to the Bible. When the interviewee needs to navigate through relationships in their communities, being humble seems to be an important way to handle oneself. On the other hand, the personal relationship one has with the Bible seems to elevate the self to a higher ground that endangers the self to be arrogant in others' eyes. Therefore, as the interviewees navigate through their faith journey, the need to deal with the fluctuating stance that the self takes toward others arises. This interesting dynamic seems to be present in most of the interviewees' accounts.

Henry's struggle with this dynamic may be the most apparent. As a well-educated man with a Confucian mentality, Henry knows the virtue of occupying the middle ground. Excellence can be abused by higher powers while low quality may invite others' contempt. Being in the middle, he can keep a distance from such troubles and inconspicuously focus on his own spirituality. However, his overflowing joy in studying and meditating on the Bible had leaked out and became noticeable. He made booklets out of the devotions he had done himself, and the pastors in his church demanded copies of them. In small groups, his obvious zeal and joy grab the attention of the other members. The interview also provided a space in which he was at the center of another person's full attention, and there were times when I wondered if he was aware of his own self-inflation. The sense of accomplishment is sometimes combined with a sense of superiority, even while he tries to suppress such a sense by qualifying his language with

phrases that convey a sense of humbleness. For example, in his eyes the fact that he read the whole Bible fifteen times challenges the old-timers at church, who have not. In his narratives, the old timers are often the objects of his criticism for their lukewarm faith practices. At other times, he regards the booklets he created as the utmost helpful tool for pastoral ministries: with the booklet in hand, any pastor, even me, can create another effective ministry because sermons will be extremely easy to create out of this booklet. However, such an elevated sense of his accomplishment gets very quickly put in conversation with his worries that he may be boastful. He quickly balances his pride with the sense that he may invite others' jealousy or misunderstanding. This struggle is mitigated by God's call he found in one of his Bible readings: God calls him to use his "talents for God's kingdom (Matthew 25:14-30)" as everyone is created into his or her uniqueness with different talents, just as "(in a large house) there are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay (2 Timothy 2: 20)" to be used for God's good work. His talents of creating Bible study tools are used as a vessel of God for godly purpose. It is nothing for him to be boastful about; at the same time, it is something he can freely boast about, since it is God's business. However, when directly asked about such wavering, he identifies his attempt to balance his sense of accomplishment with humbleness as one of his core spiritual struggles in spite of his sense of call.

Similar dynamics happened with his appointment as the church choir manager and the small group Bible study leader in the men's group. He initially thought it unfitting to his status within church and decided to approach the senior pastor to tell him he would not take up those responsibilities, because he thought he would draw too much attention to himself. However, a serendipitous conversation with another elder, who told

him it is not by his own strength but by the strength of God that he would be carrying out these responsibilities, persuaded him to take on the task of the leadership.

Mina's spiritual sensitivity is characterized by her speedy lowering of her self to listen to God's voice. She believes that if she is humbling herself, God has an easier time using her for God's will, and she desires to be used that way. This is a spiritual sensitivity she has achieved after many ups and downs. She describes one incident when she testified in front of a big crowd as the guest speaker. Coming down from the stage, she felt a sense of pride in what she accomplished and noticed that she was petting herself in her mind, saying, "I did a good job! I impacted a lot of people and made them feel blessed." Right after that moment, she noticed that the Holy Spirit was grieving next to her, saddened by her arrogance. This was followed by what she experienced as very dark several months: suddenly the overwhelmingly frequent requests to be a guest speaker had totally stopped and she felt distanced from the grace of God. Only after a deep repentance and self-reflective prayers she was recovered to her former equilibrium. She notes God hates arrogance: in doing God's work only God should be revealed.

Mina inherits such understanding of self-lowering and arrogance from her grandmother, who was a brilliant evangelist. There were times when her grandmother was invited to speak to the women in the army camps in Korea, where she touched many people's lives through her preaching. Then, her grandmother told her, one day she noticed that she was saying to God, "Lord, I will go talk some and come back," as if she is the one doing the talking without any help, maybe with a sense that she was doing God a favor, or maybe even with a sense that she was leaving God at home. At that moment, Mina's grandmother remembered, her tongue was twisted and she became unable to talk

for a while. She understood this to be a punishment for her arrogance and warned her granddaughter repeatedly that one should not mix oneself into the work of God. When talking about God, God should be uplifted with us being invisible.

Such understanding of self shows up in Daniel's narrative. For Daniel, his self needs to be an empty vessel to be used for God's glory. This is more than a notion that he carries; he is living it out intentionally in his narratives. Because he is empty, a lot of his experiences of God involve his not knowing how it happened, or even a sense of things being automatic or out of his control, presumably because it is God's doing, not his. Thus the dominant feeling he has in significant experiences is emptiness. Such emptying of the self is a process of distilling his own sense of agency so that God is in complete control of him. However, as the listener of his story, I often wondered whom I was supposed to recognize in his stories and whom I was actually seeing in him. If he was empty, was I supposed to see only God in him? Is Daniel God? Where is Daniel?

Given such a spectrum of self-experiences in the interviewees, the concept of testimony offered an interesting mode in which to express their ambivalence around their relationships to the Bible. Certainly the interview questions did not ask for testimonies(간증), namely narrative focused on how God's greatness manifested in the interviewee's life, but many of my interviewees took the interview itself as an opportunity to testify, which probably reflects what this interview meant for them. Testimonies are often marked by an announcement that the following part of the conversation will be one as in "Let me testify something (제가 간증 하나 할게요.)" Then the content of the narrative is usually focused on God, rendering God as the subject of every positive events and action. Thus, the narrator in such process turns into a passive

recipient of God's grace and powerful intervention, while the audience is invited to look at God through the story rather than focus on the narrator. As the audience of the testimonies, I noticed that there is a break down of relationality that comes with testimony. No longer a human-to-human interaction, a testimony takes up a layer of authority that elevates the narrative to a higher level than that of the audience.

Such chasm in mutuality plucked a rather sensitive cord in me, as such power differential seems to be suddenly imposed on me as the audience, rendering me no longer as a companion in their narrative journey but as a passive recipient of their testimony. There are also layers of countertransference bubbled up in me that reminded me of my past experiences: whenever someone delivered a testimony, I remember questioning why that person received such special attention from God who is supposed to love everybody. This question evoked a sense of jealousy, as the testimony left me feeling ignored or even excluded by God. For me to feel connected to a narrative about God's grace, I found that human participation and contribution to the spiritual outcome need to be accounted for, which is often understood as elements needed to be excluded from testimony.

This could be analogous to what Kathleen Greider notices as the limitation of the memoirs of mental illnesses that she utilizes as her dialogue partners in her book, *Much Madness Is Divinest Sense: Wisdom in Memoirs of Soul-Suffering*.<sup>1</sup> Among those limitations she lists I found two elements overlapping with the characteristics of testimonies of my interviewees. The first limitation she lists is that "memoirs might actually have the opposite of their most desired effect,"<sup>2</sup> causing more hurt than less, which is paradoxical. Perhaps because the memoirs of soul suffering and the testimonies

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Greider, *Much Madness Is Divinest Sense: Wisdom in Memoirs of Soul-Suffering* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Greider, 35.



of spiritual experience both deal with vulnerability, I wonder if there may be some parallel effects happening in them. I found that in the testimonies, my interviewees seem to intend to uplift the audience's soul but the testimony actually led me to feel disconnected from their experience and from their God, which would be the opposite effect. The other limitation Greider mentions has to do with the possibility of such writing becoming narcissistic, translating the stigma into something special.<sup>3</sup> I wonder if these parallel processes have something to do with the spiritual aspect of the experiences that touches upon the narcissistic formation of the person.

For Henry, through testimony his accomplishment is translated into an act of glorifying God's work in his life. In other words, by using the word testimony and the right vocabulary that comes with this form of speech, the credit that he would have usually kept for himself is given to God as the sovereign Lord of his life. There is a sense of freedom that comes with his use of the word testimony, because once his narrative is framed as testimony, the delicate balance between being arrogant and being humble breaks down and he is free to be boastful for what has happened, because it is being boastful of God, a reasonable way to glorify God. When his narrative is not placed within the form of testimony, his effort to come across as a humble man becomes more pronounced.

For Daniel, it seems that his whole self needs to be a testimony that points to God. This seems to be related to his sense of self. His self needs to be an empty vessel to become the conduit of God's grace: people need to experience God through him. Thus, in Daniel's narrative, there are a lot of dynamics that he cannot identify how they happened. Thus he is often taken by surprise. He takes the stance of an observer of God's work

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<sup>3</sup> Greider, 37.

unfolding within him and, as a person testifying, he is presenting his observation rather than an introspection of himself.

Oneil points out testimony accompanies the danger of self-glorification; so it is something he needs to be very careful about or, even better, avoid. After he realized such danger decades ago, he had not testified to his wonderful encounters with God. However, during the interview, he carefully revealed those experiences in the form of testimony, qualifying it with his strong reservation. Telling miraculous stories from wartime, he notes that miracles do not exist, because what look like miracles are simply God's protective actions coming out of God's nature. He also notes it is very easy to become conscious of the audience and exaggerate the account to make it more dramatic or believable. He noticed such tendency in another Christian's written testimony and vowed to avoid such danger. He stated he had avoided opportunities to share his stories to refrain from such exaggeration, which he regards as negative self-insertion.

In fact, when Oneil talks about the Bible, God is quite distant from his narratives. In front of God, he sees his work to be nothing, a mere gesture to leave a tiny legacy for his children. In his account, the nineteen volumes of handwritten Bible do not count much in the eyes of God. Thus, his language that describes this unusual discipline is very mundane and human, definitely distant from being a testimony: he describes his motivation to start writing the Bible as being a competitive sense of pride (오기) and his driving force to continue the hard task being something similar to addiction. This mundane understanding needed much unpacking, which revealed his piety, but his presentation of himself does not mix God and himself, thus providing him with the opportunity to be completely humble in front of God.

Mina talks about her experience of the Bible and God in a relational way: the narrative does not come across as a testimony in spite that her subject matters cover topics that would be central to testimonies. This relationality is hard to define, and I suspected whether it is also a gendered way of talking as the interview felt like the chatting that I have often experienced in small group of women with similar backgrounds characterized by free-flow conversation with relatively equalized power dynamics.<sup>4</sup> As a listener, I can quickly relate to her struggles and thoughts as they are framed within a person-to-person relationship without pressure to look beyond her to see God through her narrative.

However, Mina is also a professional testimony speaker. Due to her unique life-experience, she has been delivering testimonies in churches, disability related non-profit organizations, TV shows, and so on. Having navigated through different experiences of delivering such testimony, she finds that there are several boundaries that she has to keep for her testimonies to be impactful in terms of glorifying God. One such boundary is that she tries to leave the place where she testified as soon as possible so that she can avoid personal contacts with those who had heard her. She realized that when she moves out of the context of testimony and begins to have a conversation, she quickly becomes the center of attention, which goes against the purpose of the testimony. In a way, this boundary can also be interpreted as a pointer to the relational boundary that testimony creates. There forms a definite distance between the person testifying and her listener, which is less apparent in the rest of her interview.

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the word testimony or 證言 did not surface in Amy and Kathy's interviews.

## **Spiritual Epistemology**

Many different emotions that lead to different modes of spiritual knowing can be identified in the narratives of the interviewees. A more comprehensive treatment of those findings occurs in the following chapter. However, it is notable that many moments of spiritual epistemology are marked by a sense of heart being moved, often by a more than usual depth of emotions that marks the meaningfulness of the experience. Peace, thankfulness, and enjoyment are also strongly correlated to spiritual knowing. A sense of wrestling with a question and recognition of the meaningfulness of an event are also correlated to spiritual knowing.

## **Pastor**

Some unexpected findings come from my interaction with the interviewees and from my reflection on those interactions: the influence of my being a pastor. I was ordained less than a year before the interviews, after having been a certified candidate ready to receive a call for about ten years. During this time I had mostly served in churches as a pastoral staff member. I had the distinctive knowing that some of the things that happened in the interviews would not have happened if I was still an un-ordained candidate, so-called *Jeondosa* (전도사) when referred to in Korean American ministry settings.

The most striking experience was with Oneil. Oneil is a tall gentleman in his late 80's, and I met him in his apartment. He welcomed me with utter respect, evidenced by his demeanor and language. He told me that, when his associate pastor, who had connected me to Oneil, called him and asked him to do the interview with me, he responded with an obedient spirit, because this favor was asked by a pastor and the

interview was with a pastor. He stated that his late mother had taught him to respect pastors as if they are God or his father, which I understood as an expression of her piety. Out of some discomfort and curiosity, I asked if my age and gender make any difference in such regard. He answered pastors are pastors regardless of gender and age. This answer was surprising, as I had been struggling against gender discrimination within Korean American churches. During the first interview, he explained the process of handwriting the Bible and some dynamics around it, and then gave me a copy of his grandfather's award from South Korea's former president, a newsletter from his church that featured his story and, most importantly one of the handwritten Bibles that he wrote several years ago. He keeps track of his handwritten Bibles given out as gifts, and I noticed I stand in line after his family members, and then his senior and associate pastors. For me, it was an overwhelming gift; for him it was a proper gift to a pastor who is studying his story. However, this interview ended short according to his request to end it, as his physical condition did not allow him to talk too long.

When I came out of his home carrying the heavy handwritten books in a paper bag that he found for me in his closet, I found myself deeply moved by the interaction. I also felt troubled by the feeling that if I had not been ordained several months ago, a very possible case given my long struggle within the system, is that there is a strong chance that this interaction would not have happened. With such contrasting feelings, I realized that I had to handle my pastoral identity with great care in my interaction with my interviewees: I was not simply a researcher, but I was, or at least might be, regarded very much a pastor to them. I translated this reflection into the letter that I wrote for him. This pastoral identity needed to be part of the postcolonial phenomenological bracket, and I

tried to reflect it in the letter. As a pastor, I decided to incorporate several things into this interaction: as Oneil is a gentleman living his last days of his life, I realized I can bring my theological interpretation of his experience. This will allow an opportunity for him to either embrace or reject those interpretations and possibly bring some pastoral affirmation for his experience that he had limited language to describe. Also, I brought my feelings back to him so that he would have a chance to respond to these emotions. This was my attempt to use my pastoral identity to create an atmosphere in which he could name his own emotions, as he had difficulties doing during the first interview. Lastly, I decided to honor his gift by taking it seriously: I did a devotional reading out of his handwritten Bible to bring a reflection of interacting with his gift back to him. The following is a translation of the letter I wrote:

Dear Elder Oneil,

As I was walking out of your home, I felt deeply moved in my heart, which led me to reflect on where such impact was coming from. As I carried the heavy paper bag with your handwritten Bible written between March 14, 2008 and July 9, 2009, I realized I was actually carrying a fruit of your body's labor, a living sacrifice lifted up to God. I thought such precious gifts would not be given to anyone: then I realized I was not "anyone" to you in spite of the fact that we had never met before our meeting last week. Continuing the long legacy of faith that started with your grandfather, you honored your mother's teaching to treat pastors as God and father. In spite of my younger age, which would place me along with your grandchildren, you fully respected me as a pastor: for that I feel truly honored. I realized what I received from you was an offering to God: I was a witness of your pious act of offering, the fruit of your labor.

After about an hour-long conversation, you were feeling uncomfortable due to your physical condition. Yet you got up from time to time to find resources for me: copies of your grandfather's national awards, newsletter from your church, and your handwritten Bible. Each time you got up to find something in your room, I noticed in that action something similar to your act of sitting at your desk handwriting the Bible. I wondered if your spirituality is expressed through such bodily action. I wonder if the act of sitting at the desk for two and a half hour each day with a pen in your hand was a living sacrifice to God, an act of worship in itself. You haven't made this connection, but I wonder if your ministry of

conducting the choir, which is very much a bodily act among many things, was also your faithful living sacrifice to God.

I contemplated much about what to bring back to you or even how I would come back to you. I concluded I want to bring back my thankful heart for the gift you had given me or maybe given to God through me. As I read your handwritten Bible, God's words come to me with a fresh impression. I had a glimpse of the precious time lifted up to God as I find the dates recorded on each page of the Bible.

How does what I expressed in this letter compare to what you have experienced? I would greatly appreciate if you would share your thoughts and feelings in response to this letter.

I thank you sincerely for sharing your life with me.

When I read this letter to him, he had tears in his eyes. With a shy laughter, he said, "thank you." This letter brought a rich range of reactions. One of them seems to be empowerment. Having been appreciated, Oneil seemed to be a different man in the second interview. Unlike during the first interview, where he felt exhausted after the conversation, he was energized and shared story after story. The interview lasted for two hours. On the other hand, it seemed to have reminded him of his shortcomings, too. I noticed that my pastoral identity provided him freedom to share things that he would not with others. For example, he would share the details of his financial situations and the amount of financial contribution to his church. Also the very self-reflective part of him seemed to have been stimulated. Toward the very end of the interview, he took a sudden turn reflecting on his life. There was a definite moment that was to him a confession of his past wrongdoings, including what he regrets in his relationship to his aging wife. Such vulnerability would be something that I would not have expected from a Korean American man in his eighties if I were not an ordained pastor.

My interaction with Henry and Mina also revealed some elements that are affected by my pastoral identity. Mina, a well-seasoned navigator of Christian community, wanted to buy me breakfast as we were meeting in a family restaurant, a choice made due to its quiet environment. As my IRB did not allow receiving such favors, I had to refuse her offer, which had heightened my awareness regarding practices of offering food to pastors within the Korean Christian community. Amy had prepared a box of Chinese baked goods as a gift for me on the second interview, which I realized I had to accept with thankfulness to honor her respect toward me as a pastor.

My pastoral identity played a role mostly in Korean-speaking interviews. While interaction in English allowed addressing each other by name, in Korean, person-to-person interaction requires addressing each other by a relational title. In Korean-speaking interviews, I was addressed as pastor (목사님). In fact, the interviews with Daniel and Kathy did not present any issues of which I was aware regarding my pastoral identity. They had an understanding about this research as an academic exercise. In spite of the fact that I had noted my pastoral identity in the informed consent to indicate the limits of confidentiality in regard to safety mandates, I think I can expect a similar interaction from them even if I had not been ordained.

### **Summary**

This chapter laid out the narratives of the interviewees according to themes that thread the very distinctive narratives together. In the following chapters, these narratives will be reflected upon more in depth to dialogue with theories that can reveal different layers of understanding.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **INTERPRETIVE TASK: MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERPRETATIONS**

Now we move into the interpretive task through multidisciplinary interpretation of the data. Focusing on the experiences of the spiritually transformative moments, this chapter will move from dialogue with psychological insights by conversing with self psychology and relational cultural theory, then to an understanding of the spirituality of transformation drawing from positive psychology's understanding of spirituality and the spirituality found in Korean Confucian literature.

To accomplish that Part 1 will pay attention to the inner dynamics of what I call the movement of the heart. The theoretical background of self psychology and relational cultural theory will be introduced to lay the foundation for the conversation with these two theories. After such theoretical introduction, the narratives from the interviews will be brought to converse with these theories to identify the dynamics of the movement of the heart. This part will be mostly a psychological interpretation in spite of relational cultural theory's emphasis on the culture, because a fuller attention to the cultural dimension will be given in Part 2.

Part 2 attends to the other side of this interpretation, namely that of the spirituality and the culture surrounding it. To facilitate such conversation, I will examine the overlap of the study of spirituality and psychology, which reveals a possible vision of complexity as a crucial element of spiritual maturity. As such complexity of spiritual maturity inevitably involves the culture as its context, the cultural layers behind the psycho-spiritual dynamic of the movement of the heart will be explored through the lens of Confucian spirituality. The Confucian literature that sheds insights into the dynamics of

the movement of the heart will be explored in depth, which will lead to a conversation with a folk performing art that will open a window through which subaltern Confucian spirituality is glimpsed. This will allow us to engage postcolonial theory in the following chapter.

## **PART 1. THE MOVEMENT OF THE HEART: A DIALOGUE WITH HEINZ KOHUT'S SELF PSYCHOLOGY AND RELATIONAL CULTURAL THEORY**

My interviewees understood my question about their relationships with the Bible as a question about their spiritual experience. Interestingly enough, in my interviewees' narratives, the spiritual experiences in their encounters with the Bible often are described as a movement of heart, an occasion in which the person feels and knows that the Spirit has touched something deep inside them. When spoken in English, it is expressed in the phrase, "I was deeply moved" or as "I was touched," and in Korean, 마음에 감동(感動)을 주시다, which can be roughly translated as "receiving movement of heart." When the heart is moved, there is a knowing. For example, as one of my interviewees, Mina, talks about the Holy Spirit moving her heart in her Bible reading, she defines such moving of the heart as a knowing: "You know, the movement of heart is knowing that God is working with me this way, God is guiding me through this path, God has this sort of a plan and so on." When the heart is moved, there are many different emotions that accompany the moment, which marks the spiritual epistemology that is ripe with motivation for a positive change. With the prevalence of such language in my research, this part focuses on this movement of the heart to understand the dynamic of transformation in biblical engagement from psychological perspectives.

As I reflect on this movement, the image of a violin comes to mind. When I was a young child, I learned to play violin from my mother who was a violinist herself and also quite a perfectionist. One moment of enlightenment stays with me. Mother showed me how the perfectly pitched fingering on one string will make the other strings resonate with that note by trembling together when played. For example, if I made the upper D sound on the A string by my third finger and if my fingering was correctly making a D sound, then the string next to the A string, namely the D string, would tremble, visibly resonating with that sound and forming a perfectly matching eight degree harmony. As it did, the wooden body of the violin would hold the note with its own resonance, which I felt with my tiny body as I held the instrument with my hand and neck. In knowing and feeling the harmony, my heart pounded. Only the exact match would produce such deep resonating sound, and such exactness was achieved by a precise fingering, as a subtle difference in fingering would quickly generate a different sound. Such resonance reaches the core of our existence and disturbs the equilibrium of our being. I offer this image as a metaphor for the movement of the heart. What I found through the interviews and their careful examination is that the spiritual experiences happen in each person in their own unique way that resonates with their situation, longing, vulnerability, past experience, and personality, or what one of my interviewees called the "hole" in herself, because somehow the encounter with the Bible hit the exact cord that resonated in that person. Thus, transformative encounter does not happen every day: it is a timely encounter in which the person's inner dynamic and the biblical message match, creating deep movement in the person's heart.

In the interview, I observed two kinds of such resonance of the heart movement. One dynamic often shows up in the form of spiritual grandiosity, a term I borrow from Heinz Kohut, and its resolution associated with the encounter of the Bible's subjectivity as transcendent. The other is the relational expansion in which the reader is empathically understood by and empathically understands the immanent subjectivity of the Bible. Both elements of this spiritual experience fluidly flow within their narratives, eventually forming a bigger picture. To analyze the first dynamic that surrounds the experience of the Bible's transcendent subjectivity, I will utilize selected concepts from Heinz Kohut's self psychology as the interpretative lens. For the understanding of the experience of the immanent subjectivity of the Bible, I rely on concepts from relational cultural theory (RCT) for interpretive insights.

### **Theoretical Background**

Self psychology and RCT may at first look like an odd pair. RCT developed out of the criticism of psychological perspectives that highly value the separate self as the ideal to achieve. RCT theorists identify such value placed on the ideal of separate self to be the product of the dominant white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, 20<sup>th</sup> century Western or North American culture. Such esteeming of the value of separate self has not been helpful in inducing women's growth, as it overlooked the importance of the cultural, relational connections in the growth of individuals by only regarding such connections as the auxiliary factors that need to be referred to understand the internal, intra-psychic dynamics within the separate self. Supported by the philosophical and socio-political framework that sanctifies the rights and entitlement of the self, an ideal person is an autonomous person who has self-control and demonstrates independence from others.

Judith Jordan and Maureen Walker, in their introduction to *The Complexity of Connection*, state that by the time of the publication of *Women's Growth in Diversity*, which was the second book published on RCT through the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies at the Wellesley Centers for Women,<sup>1</sup> they have already conceptualized their model as a relational model in which “connection, not self or even self-in-relation, was now (and still is) at the center of the model.”<sup>2</sup> The initial conceptualization of the term, self-in-relation, which was intended to emphasize the connectedness of the individual through the hyphenated language, turned out to be insufficient to incorporate RCT’s search for a language that can capture “lively initiative and responsiveness in interactions” within relations and to convey the importance in relationality of cultural particularity and dynamics.<sup>3</sup> However, Jordan quickly noticed, “even this term begins to feel like a distortion, something too easily objectified, losing the fluidity and movement that we feel is essential to women’s experience.”<sup>4</sup> The language of self, even placed within hyphens to signify the connections, invited objectifying thinking that did not reflect the centrality of the connections that they understood to be at the core of human development. Thus, RCT’s conceptualization starts and ends with connection

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<sup>1</sup> According to Stone Center’s website, “The Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies at the Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW) was founded in 1981 at Wellesley College, with Jean Baker Miller, M.D. as the founding director, dedicated to the prevention of psychological problems, the enhancement of psychological well-being, and understanding comprehensive human development. Founded with a generous grant from Grace W. and Robert S. Stone, the mission was carried out through education, research, and community outreach. Particular attention was paid to the experiences of women, children, and families. Over the years, innovative theoretical work and model programs were developed, including Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) (initially known as the Stone Center Model).” “Our History,” <http://www.jbmti.org/About-us-Extra-Info/our-history> (accessed January 8, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Judith Jordan, Maureen Walker, and Linda Hartling, eds., *The Complexity of Connection: Writings from the Stone Center’s Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*. (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Baker Miller, Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey, “Some Misconceptions and Reconceptions of a Relational Approach” in *Women's Growth in Diversity: More Writings from the Stone Center*, ed. Judith Jordan (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, Jordan, Kaplan, Stiver and Surrey, 31.

and the culture in which such connection happens, shifting the central concerns of psychology from the autonomous self to the growth that happens in relations.

Self psychology has its origins in the work of Heinz Kohut. It is a model of psychology that developed out of Freudian psychoanalysis, which bases its understanding of human being on a drive model that conceptualizes conscious and unconscious psychological motivations as driven by biological urges, that encourages the understanding of separate self. This model may seem to be what RCT attempts to move away from. In fact, it is quite easy to find pronounced critique of self psychology within the literature of RCT. For example, in *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy*, Maureen Walker notes that

Citing the Kohutian model as a case in point, Jordan (2002, pp 233-234) draws a distinction between relationship with a selfobject, which is under the fantasized control of the individual, and the relationship with a person who has his or her own subjectivity. To a greater or lesser degree, the goal in many of these models is individual internalization of the functions of relationship in order to become self-sustaining. It would seem, then, that the implicit goal of development is to outgrow the need for relationship.<sup>5</sup>

Probably, such an implicit goal reflects the underlying model of drives that RCT criticizes as insufficiently helpful or even damaging to the experience of women. Jordan says elsewhere that

Most recently in the clinical realm, Kohut (1984) has emphasized the ongoing need for relationships throughout life. His concept of the “selfobject” pertains to the importance of others in shaping our self image and maintaining self esteem. But this theory, too, is built on a model of drives, with others used as objects to perform some function for a self that still remains intrinsically and ideally separate, if at best empathically connected.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Maureen Walker, “How Relationships Heal” in *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy*, eds. Maureen Walker and Wendy Rosen (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Judith Jordan, “A Relational Perspective for Understanding Women’s Development,” in *Women’s Growth in Diversity: More Writings from the Stone Center*, ed. Judith Jordan (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 12.

For Jordan, the emphasis placed on relationships in Kohutian model was not enough to describe the psychic reality that is experienced in the relationships. Within the RCT model, the individuals develop positive changes by way of connections with others; thus the relationships become the locus of growth.

Relational Cultural Theory provides a very useful lens to understand the data of this research because of the primacy of the relational contexts that interviewees identify as the locus of their changes. Also, RCT can provide a conceptualization that allows the serious cultural analysis that my data call for. Thus, I find that it is very helpful to pair RCT with self psychology, especially in terms of conceptualizing the developmental process of the self. I bring these two theories into my conceptualization of the relationships formed between the Bible and the lay leader; first because of the particularity of the connections that are formed in the collectivist culture of the Korean American churches; and also because of the particularity of the connection that one forms in relation to the Bible, a non-human yet sacred object that moves between objectivity and subjectivity according to the subjective experience of its reader.

Self psychological understanding of the self, which depends on the relationships with others in its development, can have a potent impact in creating a growth inducing understanding of the individual's experience within a collectivist society. Resembling the need of an individual who needs to self-differentiate from the enmeshed family relationships in Bowenian family systems theory, the search for self in a collectivist society seems to be a developmental process that presents in individual's life throughout the lifespan, challenged by what I would call the "sticky" relational systems that overall societal structure provides and motivated by the need to untangle oneself from the

possibly smothering web of relationships. Just as relational cultural theorists conceptualize, the relational context is not something one can escape from, but rather is persistently present, shaping the individual. Probably because of that, self psychology's understanding of selfobject transference as a process of inner projection has all the more persuasiveness in the collectivist community. While RCT sees clarity about self and others and sense of self-worth to be part of the five good things that good connection generates, I think such self-understanding could benefit from self psychology's insight on self's developmental process. The collectivist community's relational value in Korean society can be said to be *Jeong*, which is characterized by its relationality that contains both love and hate, making the boundaries between the self and the other soluble, according to W. Anne Joh.<sup>7</sup> In my observation, such *Jeong* is built as individuals involved in relationships violate personal boundaries to a certain extent and thus by blurring the boundary, merge one's identity with others. In this process, the value of an individual becomes implicit in the contribution to others and to the group as the result of such merging, while through constant boundary violation the individual may suffer narcissistic wounds, characterized by Korean vocabulary of *Han*, that need the empathic gaze of others. For Kohut narcissism is part of the healthy development process that involves what he calls selfobject experiences. Selfobjects are those that the self experience as extension of the self responding to self's developmental needs such as feeling self's grandiosity mirrored by powerful others (mirroring selfobject transference), idealizing powerful others (idealizing selfobject transference) and finding similarity in others (twinship selfobject transference). The self develops in the process of getting its

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<sup>7</sup> W. Anne Joh, "The Transgressive Power of Jeong: A Postcolonial Hybridization of Christology," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 155.



selfobject needs empathized, while sometimes realizing some of its needs are frustrated due to the limitation of the reality. Through experiences of such gratification and frustrations the self matures into a healthy self by incorporating both experiences, which is the process Kohut calls transmuting internalization. However, such needs are traumatically frustrated the self is inflicted with narcissistic injury. Yohan Ka, a Korean pastoral theologian argues the dynamic of *Jeong-han* to be a culture-bound narcissism.<sup>8</sup> When Ka uses the term narcissism, he means narcissistic injury rather than the healthy form of narcissism that Kohut conceptualized as part of normal developmental process. *Jeong-han* as a narcissistic injury demonstrates insatiable thirst for *Jeong*, a loving attention to find an opportunity for transmuting internalization. With such need, the mirroring that is directed to the individual that affirms the self as a worthwhile person becomes a tantalizing need of a person that, in Korean communities, is answered mostly through collectivist relationships. The self's clarity and sense of worth that RCT notices to be the result of growth-fostering relations can be nurtured through empathic mirroring, but such mirroring is rather on the scarce side when the need of the group is put ahead as a value trumping the need of an individual. Self, when translated as a metaphor for a valuable individual in such society, is formed through an inner process that the surrounding relational context has great influence on. For the self to develop a sense of agency in such contexts, it needs to project its need somehow. In this context, what develops is a separable self. In contrast to the individualistic context where RCT is formed as a resisting force against individualistic self-understanding, in a collectivist society connections both good and bad are foundational assumptions for understanding of

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<sup>8</sup> Yohan Ka. "Jeong-han as a Korean Culture-Bound Narcissism: Dealing with *Jeong-han* Through *Jeong*-Dynamics," *Pastoral Psychology* 59 no. 2 (April 2010), under "In This Issue," <http://link.springer.com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/journal/11089/59/2/page/1> (accessed October 13, 2013).

human beings. In such context, an introspective examination of an individual as a person who can be conceptualized as separate self can be a helpful strategy toward growth. In other words, such “separability” becomes an important factor of growth.

With such need for a development of a separable self in communal-society, RCT’s attention to the authentic relationships provides a helpful conversational ground. RCT’s assumptions about the therapeutic relationships include a therapist who is trained to introspect and process her or his own strategies of disconnection and their etiology. Such capable therapist can constantly come up with the one good authentic thing to say to the client to provide authenticity and empathy until the mutual empathy grows out of the relationships. Thus, in the therapeutic relationships that form within an RCT framework, such empathic and relationally mindful presence of the therapist becomes an indispensable element of the mutuality that fosters growth. Such a capacity that the therapist is supposed to demonstrate, seen from self psychological perspective, is a healthy, cohesive self, capable of vicarious introspection or empathy as well as of self-empathy. RCT’s model of therapeutic relationships creates the social context of mutuality, which is hard to find in mostly unbalanced power structures of the reality, through the self-regulating capacity of the therapist who can provide authentic relational presence. Such relational presence that can contribute to mutuality seems rare in lived experience. The feminist ideal of power-with is at its full function, but it relies on this rare context of therapeutic relationship.<sup>9</sup> What if such capacity is lacking in a relationship? When this question is brought into collectivist society that depends on hierarchical power structure, it becomes a heavier question.

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<sup>9</sup> Anna Mercedes problematizes the “feminist models of emphasizing power-with” as relying on “extremely rare social contexts in order to function,” in *Power For: Feminism and Christ’s Self Giving* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 136.

When I bring such concern to the relationships between the Bible and its reader, the challenge becomes a bit more complicated. The Bible as a sacred text is a complicated being. As a text, often in the form of a book or in Kathy's case a smartphone app, it is a thing, an object that is not a living organism. However, as an object of belief, the Bible is experienced as having its own voice and subjectivity that can interact with its reader, when seen from the reader's faithful perspective. The challenge is that the Bible does not always present itself with subjectivity, even to the most faithful. In general, the Bible as a sacred book is a "not-yet-realized subjectivity" that may or may not engage the reader at a given point: one may have a long spell of not reading the Bible that is not quite motivated by what relational cultural theorists call strategy of disconnection, which namely "the methods people develop to stay out of relationships in order to prevent wounding or violation",<sup>10</sup> engaged by either the Bible or the reader. Or, even in those who read the Bible regularly, some part of the Bible may engage the reader in a very subjective experience but another part of the Bible will hit the reader dryly, simply rendering the experience as a simple text reading without much inspiration. Even Daniel, for example, who has deliberately trained himself to read the Bible regularly and claims that all Bible passages speak to him powerfully, talks about his challenge in reading the Pentateuch portion of the Bible:

There are books in the Bible that I feel like "Why am I reading this? What does it have to do with me? Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy, of course, the beginning of Numbers is, man, what does all this mean? What [do] all these supposed to mean in my life?" So, those are the things that I thought about today. Honestly. Why am I supposed to read this, but I read it anyways. I read it anyways. Just to read it. That [is] so bad in a sense that I'm just reading it to get through it.

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010), 108.

The interviews reveal almost serendipitous moments of mutuality, but these moments are temporary and not comprised of a sustained, consistent presence of subjectivity of both the reader and the Bible. The relationships between the Bible and its reader include periods in which subjective relationship is not-yet realized. During these periods the reader as the person with subjectivity engages in the reading activity and tries to interact with the Bible, as if it has subjectivity through various means. They include trying to find theological meanings of the passage, engaging other religious activities, like listening to the sermons and having fellowship with others. This is a slightly different terrain from RCT's therapy setting: what is a person to do when the relationship is pending, not because the other is engaged in a strategy of disconnection, but because it has just not happened yet? Can it be that a focus on the self as the locus of growth is helpful in such moments? In fact, in analyzing some of the interviews, I found that there is a constant ebb and flow of movement toward mutual relationships and self focus. Given such data and the motivation to build a separable self in a collectivist context, I will explore Kohut's understanding of self-formation process in self psychology as well as relational cultural theory in more depth.

### **Kohut's Understanding of Self-Formation and Development of Narcissistic Injury**

Heinz Kohut's conceptualization of self-formation is that it is a life-long process starting in a person's infancy. As one of the last persons who had a living memory of Sigmund Freud, Kohut's initial conceptualization of theories operated within the psychoanalytic framework laid out by Freud, depending on the drive theory. However, his clinical experiences with narcissistic personality disorder clients drove him to conceptualize different kind of projections from traditional transferences. These clients

did not respond well to the traditional mode of psychoanalytic therapy because the traditional form of transference failed to form, potentially rendering themselves unanalyzable. Rather, these clients had different kind of projections that Kohut called selfobject transferences, in which they experience the therapist as an extension of themselves. These experiences initially helped him understand the narcissistic personality disorder client's developmental history and treatment process. However, by the time he published *The Restoration of the Self*, he had expanded his understanding of selfobject experiences as applicable to all persons.

Kohut theorized that selfobject transferences' etiology is found in infancy. Departing from the Freudian construction of the apparatus of the ego composed of the id, ego and super-ego, Kohut developed a new metaphor of the self to explain the therapeutic cases in which therapeutic approach based on drive theory fell short. In his conceptualization, a child's self develops fed by the admiration of the caregivers. First, the child as an infant has a sense of omnipotence in the midst of such admiration, sensing his or her self as the center of the universe. However, this sense of omnipotence gets frustrated through the limiting reality in which the child exists. This axis of development (pole of grandiosity) that allows the child to assert his or her self needs to be mirrored by the selfobjects, often the primary caregivers, so that his or her healthy exhibitionism can be incorporated as part of his or her self.<sup>11</sup> On another axis (pole of ideals), the child develops an idealized parent figure. David Moss summarizes,

As the child's sense of omnipotence collides with the boundaries of reality, disappointment ensues. Eden is lost. In an attempt to deal with this loss, the child

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<sup>11</sup> Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 171.

tries to rescue himself from feelings of emptiness and sadness by attributing to meaningful adult, usually a parent, the lost sense of power and perfection.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the parent becomes the child's selfobject that the child incorporates into himself or herself by idealizing him or her. These two poles of narcissistic development become integral parts of the self. Thus, in Kohut's view, narcissism is a sign of health, a necessary part of a person's psychological development. For the sake of the self's full development, these two poles need to stand in tension with each other, forming what Kohut called a "tension arc," which he describes as "the abiding flow of actual psychological activity that establishes itself between the two poles of the self, i.e., a person's basic pursuit toward which he is 'driven' by his ambitions and 'led' by his ideals."<sup>13</sup> Stephen Mitchell and Margaret Black put this process into a more mundane description: "The child comes to appreciate the unrealistic nature of his views of himself and his parents as he suffers the ordinary disappointments and disillusionments of everyday life: he can't walk through walls, her father cannot decree that her soccer team will always win, and so on."<sup>14</sup> However, this optimal frustration is not to be achieved through the direct confrontation with the narcissistic quality. Rather a child can emerge out of the unrealistic state by having the safety of enjoying such state. Again Mitchell and Black provide a fitting image: "The child who is swooping around the living room in his Superman cape needs to have his exuberance enjoyed, not have his fantasies interpreted as grandiose,"<sup>15</sup> in the negative colloquial sense. Disturbance in this self formation process, according to Kohut, can result in the narcissistic personality disorders, which he

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<sup>12</sup> David Moss, "Narcissism, Empathy and the Fragmentation of the Self: An Interview with Heinz Kohut," *Pilgrimage* 4, no. 1 (1976), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self*, 180.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Mitchell and Margaret Black, *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 160.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell and Black, 159.

understood to be a disturbance in self development, which could be healed by the process of transmuting internalization, a process where the tension arc between the two poles of grandiosity and ideal goes through the process of self formation in the safety of the empathic presence of the therapist who can function as the selfobject of the person. In this conceptualization, the presence of the selfobject, fulfilled by the parents or any meaningful others, is essential for the self to mature. Echoing the critiques of Relational Cultural theorists, Mitchell and Black point out that in doing so, “self psychology leaves the other only implicit in its relation to the self.”<sup>16</sup> Through such dependence on others throughout the developmental process as the relational contexts change and new relationships form, an individual seems to have the opportunity to expand his or her self by a constant transmuting internalization process. Those relationships provide opportunities for the tension arc to form through mirroring, idealizing and twinship selfobjects experiences however temporary they may be.

In my conversation with self psychology, I especially have interest in the ebb and flow of the appearance of the grandiose self in the relationships between the Bible and the reader. In my ministry within Korean American Presbyterian Churches, I have often wondered if selfobject experiences would form in the Bible reading experiences. In a search for an Korean American identity, when many Korean American Christian parents face the opportunity to give their children English names, they have given Biblical names, thus rendering numerous number of Korean American children named David, Daniel, Joseph, Esther, Sarah, Rachel, Deborah and so on. I remember my experience searching for my daughter’s name, trying to extract as much meaning as possible from the Biblical character but facing the challenge of choosing a name that does not overlap with too

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<sup>16</sup> Mitchell and Black, 168.

many other Korean American girls. On the other hand, I have also heard many testimonies in which Korean American Christians place their own experience of sacred moments within the narrative of the Bible to make sense of it. From those experiences, I have wondered whether the selfobject transferences are very much at work in our interaction with the Bible, letting the reader oscillate between mirroring, idealizing and twinship selfobjects found in the Bible. The data seems to support my hunch, at least in this small sample.

From RCT's perspective, the state in which the selfobject transferences are projected in its fullest sense may not be experienced as the most authentic moments. Mitchell and Black present a case study of a young man named Eduardo, who had some similarity to Mr. Z, whom Kohut analyzed and presented as a case that demonstrates self psychology's conceptualization in contrast to ego psychology's framework. In the case of Eduardo, a man with narcissistic injury due to his mother's failure to provide him the mirroring he desperately needed, the notable thing is how disconnected the analyst felt in the initial process as Eduardo engaged in the therapeutic process, projecting selfobject transference on the analyst, regarding the analyst not as another person but simply as an extension of himself. When several of the analyst's responses to Eduardo were received merely as an interruption to his self-obsessive narratives, she experienced a significant disconnection from him, which I reflect to be similar to the moments when Henry and Daniel gave me their testimonies:

Feeling unable, in these early sessions, to offer him anything that seemed remotely helpful, over time the analyst became generally silent. She became aware of fleeting fantasies while with him. She envisioned herself getting up and quietly leaving the room; as long as she reappeared to end the session and bid him farewell, she imagined, he would never notice she was gone. More disturbing,



however, was a sense that she had become invisible, a feeling that she didn't exist.<sup>17</sup>

However, in a self psychological framework, these disconnected feelings of the analyst were not to be understood as a failed connection, but as a process that the self goes through to work on the self's construction that has not yet come to a satisfying maturity. This analyst was actually surprised when Eduardo became angry and depressed when she announced her need to cancel one of his sessions; Eduardo had a great need for the analyst to be there for him as an important part of who he was at that point. This disconnection, which I find difficult to fit into RCT's framework, did not happen as a strategy of disconnection that resulted from a terrorizing fear of the connection, forming the relational paradox<sup>18</sup> as understood in RCT. To me, it looks like a distinctive process that the self as a powerlessly isolated being needs to go through to gain the capacity to be in connection, even before realizing the possible fear of the connection itself. As Kohut, in his later work, saw the self-formation process to be a lifelong process that all people, psychologically healthy or not, go through, he allows us to think that such disconnections resulting from projecting selfobject transferences to various others can be part of any interaction. When we bring the Bible into the relationships, the Bible can provide an empathic-enough environment where selfobject transferences can easily form. Granted, what I observe may not be comparable to a sustained long-term therapeutic relationships, as the interviews occurred only twice for each interviewee. Still, I am arguing that I captured glimpses of the process in which the interviewees are forming their selves by

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<sup>17</sup> Mitchell and Black, 152.

<sup>18</sup> Relational paradox is formed when a person employs the strategy of disconnection because of the absence of safety and respect in the relationships. Such strategy of disconnection would be the safe alternative to the connection that can prove to be unsafe, yet there is usually a longing for the connection that coexist with the terror of connection whether in conscious or unconscious level. For the therapy to be effective the therapist needs to attend to both side of such paradox, when it emerges. See Walker and Rosen, *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy* (New York: Guilford, 2004), 9.

testing out their grandiose, idealizing, and twinship selfobjects found in the relationships with the Bible.

Alternatively, relational cultural theory offers a fitting conceptualization to the analysis of the interviews, especially around the moments of changes, notable moments when the experiences of empathy, wrestling, questioning, and struggling that happen within the relationships are crystalized into a spiritual knowing. While the various theological discourses within the church have the potential to formulate controlling images that could disempower the Bible reader, many of the remarkable moments that interviewees noted as significant in their lives are marked by the sign of the five good things that Relational Cultural Theory postulates as qualities of growth-fostering connection. These five good things are

1. A sense of zest or energy that comes from connecting with another person(s).
2. The ability and motivation to take action in the relationships as well as in other situations.
3. An increased knowledge of oneself and the other person(s).
4. An increased sense of worth.
5. A desire for more connections beyond the particular one.<sup>19</sup>

I have earlier noted that the mutuality that RCT aims to accomplish in relationships may be rare in real life experiences, but when such mutuality is realized in Bible reading experience, it marks a significant transformative moment. When the subjectivity of the Bible is realized and the interviewees experience the subjectivity of the Bible as empathizing with them, they are provided a chance to form mutuality with the Bible by reciprocating with empathy toward the subjectivity of the Bible: when an interviewee felt understood by the Bible, he or she would be motivated to actively understand the will of God reflected in the Bible. Maureen Walker quotes Judith Jordan to point out that

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<sup>19</sup> Walker and Rosen, 163.

“mutual empathy is key in moving a relationship toward deeper and more resilient connection.”<sup>20</sup> This mutual empathy presumes that the therapist has a capacity to be moved by the client, which is also a capacity to be vulnerable and authentic for the sake of the client. On the other hand, the client must be willing to respond to such openness in the relationship. What resonates strongly with the data of the interviews is this language of being moved, which signals the impact of the relationship on those in it.<sup>21</sup> The interviewees often used the language of “being moved” to describe their meaningful interactions with the Bible, God, or others, which often carried spiritual connotations. Judith Jordan notes in her response to Linda Hartling’s description of a case that involved the issue of shame and humiliation, that there are different kinds of movements marked by its direction; moving toward, moving against, moving away from, and moving with.<sup>22</sup> Such conceptualization will also aid the analysis of the data, as we will see later.

### **Understanding Spiritual Life through a Self Psychology Lens**

Drawing from the insights of self psychology’s understanding of self-formation, one aspect that stands out is the grandiosity experienced in the interviewees’ spiritual life. The spiritual context in which the Bible and other religious elements are experienced provides a safe outlet to express and build a grandiose self, with very good mirroring support from the community and various texts from the Bible. Henry’s very short history as a Christian seems to be a mystery for himself, a miracle in his mind. He reflects on the

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<sup>20</sup> Walker, “How Relationships Heal”, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Such movements features prominently in relation cultural theorists’ works as in Judith Jordan’s article, “Movement of Mutuality and Power,” *Work in Progress* no. 53 (1991), 1-11; and Jean Baker Miller and Irene Stiver’s article, “Movement in Therapy: Honoring the Strategy of Disconnection,” *Work in Progress* no. 65 (1994).

<sup>22</sup> Linda Hartling, Wendy Rosen, Maureen Walker and Judith Jordan, “Shame and Humiliation: From Isolation to Relational Transformation,” in *The Complexity of Connection: Writings from the Stone Center’s Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*, ed. Judith Jordan, Maureen Walker, and Linda Hartling (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 123-24.

serendipitous event in which he decided to enter the worship service at a church for the first time in his life, an act that he had intentionally avoided throughout his life, and asks why? In what resembles a Freudian slip, he says, “God called me to use me for God’s work. I feel that. Maybe to phrase it more decently I can say God called me, as late as it may, to use me to expand God’s Kingdom. As late as it may be.” Having positively experienced the Christian life in his late 50’s, Henry tries hard to make sense of the fact that for fifty some years he had not been part of this good life that he currently has. In the midst of his attempt to make sense of the purpose of his late conversion, he slips in a simple word, which I translated with a phrase “as late as it may be (늦게나마)” through which I sensed his ambivalent feelings of being neglected for the previous years. This sense of neglect, which he attributed to his own insistence in other parts of his narratives, constitutes a discrepancy with his experience of God and the Bible that he so proudly testifies for. This he corrects quickly saying, “As I reflect on the Bible, I came to think that it is rather that God’s time has come to call me. Feeling this in my meditation, I began to read the whole Bible, which I did fifteen times.” Here he reframes his sense of neglect, excusing God’s neglect as mystery, a quick attempt to protect himself from a narcissistic injury that his now most important selfobject, namely the subjectivity of the Bible or God, could have caused him. Almost like a flight from a terrifying moment, reflecting RCT’s model of relational paradox, Henry moves more deeply toward the selfobject: he reads the whole Bible fifteen times. In fact, God’s timing makes many events very special for him, which has contributed to the sense that God called him as God’s servant in the most concrete sense and he should respond to this call by finding God’s purpose and responding to God appropriately. In the first interview, which started

with an interview question I brought, Henry felt that whatever he talks about, he had to give his testimony of his conversion, which was miraculous to him because of the fortuitous timing of the events. Regardless of my agenda as the interviewer, it was God's story that I was supposed to hear and he was entitled to share. On another occasion, when he wavered whether he would take up on the offer to lead the Bible study group, again a conversation with an elder, who he happened by chance to talk to at a cafeteria, helped him make sense of God's call, because things that happen by chance must be due to God's arrangement, which translates into God's guidance. His sense of call crystalized when he came across Second Timothy 2:20-21 and the parable of talents in a sermon:

One day God told me, "Didn't I give you your talents?" There is a passage in the Bible that says that everyone is given their own talents according to their lots. Also it says God made gold vessels, silver vessels, and clay vessels according God's need. If I say, I've been making this devotional notebooks or say I have read the whole Bible twice this week, it may be a positive challenge for those who had been coming to church for long time, but people may think "what's that newbie doing here?" This is a delicate part. At first, I tried to be invisible in terms of what I do in my spiritual journey. I did so for about a year. Then one day, I received a biblical message through the sermon "I gave you those talents. It's not your merits. I called you to use you to expand God's kingdom, my kingdom."

With a confirmation received through the Bible, he finds freedom to express his talents, his work, to others whom he feared to judge him. Such fear seems temporarily to disappear when he talks about his talents, which are now affirmed as God's gift rather than his own merit.

What was interesting to me was how I felt distanced from Henry when he began to talk about these gifts from God, which was a very different experience of him from the moments when he was not talking about those gifts. As I noted in the previous chapter, those moments had much to do with testimonies, too. Henry marked certain parts of his narrative as testimonies by calling it so. When his accomplishments were theologized as

his participation in the work to expand God's Kingdom through God-given gifts, I found that his self-understanding expanded, reaching a grandiosity that I tried to mirror but found difficult to connect to. Part of the difficulty was related to my gender, age, and my ordained status, as I found that I was many different persons to him in those moments. I was a pastor at one moment, a young woman who is politely listening to an older man speaking, or even like a student graduated from his class. In those moments, he came across to me as a pompous person, in spite of his call for me to look beyond him and see God in him. This God had many theological marks that I can intellectually relate to as the God I have known, but this God did not feel like mine. This God felt very much like Henry's God to whom he has sole access. I wanted to test out this disconnection, so I brought a narrative in the letter I gave him in the second interview. I brought back a reflection from my own past in which someone's testimony that focused on her experience of God had made me feel pressured to see my own spiritual life as something less than hers. I asked him what he thinks about such possibility of someone else hearing his testimony and feeling small on account of the powerful experience he had with God. This prompted a very candid answer in which he reflected deeply into his inner struggle to balance his sense of call and his fear of becoming boastful. He laid out various efforts he made to deal with this inner struggle. In those moments, I found him to be authentic and relational, easy to empathize with and understand. However, even after this short connecting moment was gone, he could plunge into another bout of grandiose talk during which I again felt excluded from the narrative.

My reflection notes after the first interview recorded the distinctive feeling that I was functioning as his mirror, like the pond into which Narcissus poured himself. As his

interviewer, as I fluctuated in my emotional responses to him between connection and disconnection, not in terms of my attention but in terms of the feeling of distance from him. I came to wonder if I was witnessing a process of self-formation, something similar to what Heinz Kohut called transmuting internalization. Henry's remarkable accomplishment and exciting spiritual journey through the Biblical engagement happened in a very foreign territory that he had avoided throughout his life, namely the church or Christianity. In his description of his life before his conversion, I heard of a person who was empathic to others' need, a family man, a man that holds a group together through his mature relationship skills. Yet, when he was testifying about God and the Bible, he turned into someone who was so focused on what he perceived to be the work of God that it was my experienced that he lost sight of me, his listener. A presentation of grandiose self, probably becoming so through a mirroring selfobject transference, seemed to form a tension arc with the idealizing transference he cast on God who was talking and leading him through the Bible and miraculous timings. Here the subjectivity of the Bible is experienced as the transcendent, and as the reader, Henry responds by idealizing it and inflating grandiosity in him. This particular experience regarding his testimonies felt to me as more like an earlier stage of the developmental process, which reflects his new journey within the realm into which he stepped three years ago. Spirituality he found in Biblical engagement had provided him an opportunity to start another growth spurt that gives him a deep satisfaction that he has not felt during his adult years.

These grandiose moments seem to be part of spiritual journey, maybe a necessary part that other interviewees experienced as well. Mina also notes an experience of grandiose(“교만 한”) self, though it was a moment she recognizes as a breach in

relationship with God, a moment that hurt the Holy Spirit so much that she fantasized the Holy Spirit crying while sitting next to her. Due to her special circumstances and her extraordinary faith journey with her disabled son, she became a highly sought after speaker for events in disability-related non-profit organizations and in churches. Those speaking engagements where she delivered testimonies of her experience of God as she and her son struggled through the difficulties were mostly well received. At one event, she recognized the arrogance in her:

Unexpectedly, I became a celebrity: writing for a newspaper, publishing a book, and speaking in large gatherings. As things worked out well, I've been thinking I was doing well. Many people get blessed through me. This is a job well done! Truthfully, the testimonies had to be what springs out of my heart, testimonies about God, but at one point I found that those testimonies became my stories, stories that glorify me. When talking to someone or serving someone, we need to do it with words from God, strength from God, but I found that I had put myself ahead of God. Then when I spoke at one place, everything sort of exploded. It was a huge crowd and everything went well. Then God showed me myself. It was like I was looking at myself from someone else's perspective. I came down from the pulpit and sat down at my seat and I said to myself with a grin in my face, "I've done well. I delivered a lot of grace today." I was assessing myself and giving myself the best grade. Then I noticed that the Holy Spirit was sad and was crying sitting next to me. "Is it really you who's doing the good work?" I realized I have pushed away the Holy Spirit and put myself at the center. The Holy Spirit was sad. I made the Holy Spirit sad. My arrogance made the Spirit sad.

This brief moment of realization of her temporarily grandiose self was the definite mark of her biggest sin for Mina, as this experience was exactly what her grandmother had warned against. She tells the story of her grandmother's younger years, when she and her husband were living in the mountainous region, where several military camps were located. As she was a good evangelizing speaker, she was often invited to deliver God's message to the group of the wives of the military personnel. One day, just like Mina, she found herself feeling grandiose (교만), as she was leaving her place to get to the speaking event. To her surprise, her tongue was twisted and she became unable to speak.



Telling Mina this anecdote, she warned “never to mix yourself with God’s messages,” a call to distinguish the self from the transcendence of God. She took it as a spiritual restriction that warned her of the danger of stealing the glory of God, which is what Mina understood she did in her own experience. Now, Mina confesses that she has grown to a certain extent, by developing spiritual sensitivity that examines herself to discern God’s intention in every event in her life. For example, when she received a call from her pastor regarding my interview, rather than dismissing it or pondering on it for a long time, she discerned that she would rather quickly respond, assuming that God intends her to be part of some plan that she doesn’t know yet. Yet, combining trust in God and humble spontaneity, she says, her spiritual sensitivity is about her action that opens door for things to happen according to God’s intention. From my perspective, she developed a strategy to control her grandiosity by lowering herself as a spontaneous servant to God to participate in God’s action with modesty.

Daniel deals with such grandiosity coming from spiritual experience differently: instead of “lowering” the self he deals with his grandiosity by “emptying” himself. Daniel described his first spiritual encounter during his high school year church retreat. In his trance-like moment, he felt like he was flying, a very surreal experience. At that time, he was struggling to be part of the praise team, because he found himself to be terribly untalented in his instrument. He had prayed desperately that God might show him that God will be there for him. The encounter happened on the stage. Daniel describes the moment:

I kid you not, but that next set that I went up maybe an hour later after that prayer time, it was a completely different person up there. No one could believe that was me playing. Like that’s how much change there was. It was night and day. I was doing all these crazy drum moves and people were like no way! They didn’t think

of me doing these things. (How did that happen?) Honestly that had to be in the Spirit. I really do believe. That was my first experience with God. Literally I felt like I was viewing, looking down at myself and like I was totally out of the moment. And I didn't really know anything, I was just looking around and everyone was like in tears, just watching, couldn't believe what they were seeing. And at that moment, that night, I just got on my knees and gave my life to Christ. There was no other way; there was no other way it could have happened. That was my initial saving point, when I was actually saved.

This experience was immediately followed by prophecies delivered by his leaders who prayed for him. Through those prayers, he received the message that he is "supposed to be a person that is filled with wisdom," which was followed by two of his leaders being inspired to tell him to focus on three books of the Bible; Proverbs, Galatians and Ephesians. With a canon of books specifically given to him as a guiding reference for becoming a God-mandated person filled with wisdom, he had diligently reflected on those books to find his ideal and, perhaps, to be mirrored by those books. While he did not use such language, from the content of what he says, I get a sense that he is the chosen one who sees himself in these books. In Proverbs, he identifies himself with the character of the son listening to the father who is imparting his wisdom through proverbial sayings. While the primary action in this Bible reading experience may be summarized as "filling" himself, his narratives about his experiences as a person living outside the Biblical world are characterized by "emptying." Because he laid everything down before Christ, or in his words, because he laid down "pain, suffering, my pride, any of the secular stuff" before him, he is empty, a rather pure being through whom God can show that God is a living God. I understood his personal theology and its logic, and the fact that it showed quite consistently throughout the interview was very admirable.

However, I had to wonder about many things. As I listened to him, I noticed that I was presented with a picture of a shell of a person who is empty and thus so transparent

that only God was expressed. He presented himself as being no obstacle to others seeing God through him. It was an invitation that he gave me consistently throughout his narratives, which he understood to be a testimony. As the recipient of this invitation, I tried to step into such a world, but I kept asking myself whether I was seeing the personhood of Daniel, the living and breathing person who has a life with human shortcomings. After the first interview, my reflection notes show how deeply I was troubled by this experience, not because of the content, but because I felt as if I did not meet a person. His narrative felt very much rehearsed, which I think could have been the result of having shared it with many people already, evidenced by his comment during the second interview in which he thanked me for the opportunity to share his testimony. My difficulty to relate not to his experience but to his person, in my mind, points to the grandiosity of this emptiness through which he became a vessel that contained God who replaced his own self, merging his idealizing axis and grandiose axis, which resulted in a person with tremendous energy to maintain such a state in all he does.

However, Daniel's effort to maintain such grandiosity may very well be part of the healthy growth process that he is experiencing. Even for Henry, who was already in his late 50's, this was a necessary growth process to incorporate the newly found spirituality into his self. In fact, he was expanding a pre-formed self that already had a deeply contextualized identity. His former identity before immigration to the United States as an English teacher in Korean public high school system provides him a springboard from which he jumped up to the current stage of his developmental process. In the Korean American Presbyterian Church, in which studying the Bible is valued as one of the most virtuous spiritual activities, Henry found a context in which his former

skills flourished and his former identity transformed. In his understanding of his current practice of engaging the Bible, he uses metaphors, skills, and critical lenses he formerly used in his work as a high school teacher. This seems to provide what Kohut calls a “sense of the continuity of the self, the sense of our being the same person throughout life despite changes in our body and mind, in our personality makeup, in the surroundings in which we live.”<sup>23</sup> Henry tenuously maintained such sense of continuity of himself through the isolated context of his own nuclear family life and in his beauty shop by explaining beauty products to his customers using his teaching skills. In fact, this continuity of self developed into an expansion of self. Henry says,

These days, I tell God in my prayers every morning and evening, “I really love working for you God these days. I love it so much more than working as a teacher. I enjoy it so much more.” Pastor, you mentioned last time that I seemed to ‘enjoy’ all of these, and it is so true. I finally found my career! I pray every day, “God, help me to persist in this faith and guide me.” My small group members tell me, “How boring your life must have been, if you did not come to church [and became a Christian]!”

Such deep sense of satisfaction spills over to other relationships. When he is in his very relational self that he demonstrated in his second interview, he is able to express himself in a helpful and empathic way. In those moments, what he had built up in himself and in his relationship to the Bible transforms into the group’s cultural selfobject. Phillis Sheppard explains,

Kohut writes of cultural selfobjects, which he defined as those creative persons in ‘religion, philosophy, art and the sciences’ who, in the case of group illness,<sup>24</sup> are in ‘empathic contact with the illness of the group self and, through their work... mobilize the unfulfilled narcissistic needs and point the way toward vital change.

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<sup>23</sup> Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 179.

<sup>24</sup> Here the group illness denotes group phenomenon such as that of Nazi Germany, in which creativity of the cultural selfobject is severely limited. While Henry is not quite located within such severe group illness, he noted that there are certain rigidity among the church members evidenced by passive spiritual disciplines and power struggles within the church government. In such environment he could be functioning as the cultural selfobject through his creative and empathic contact of the culture of the group.

These creative persons give form to the cultural malaise and the societal conditions that perpetuate group illness.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, his expanding self, demonstrated through his work with the Bible, inspired others, as he embodies many of the ideals of his church: a spiritually disciplined person who is deeply inspired by the Bible. This was evidenced by his pastor's appraisal of him that this pastor shared with me when I contacted him as I searched for interviewees. Henry had prepared for me before the interview his scripts he used when he was selected to deliver a testimonial speech of his conversion experience in an evangelizing event, which ended up airing on the Korean American radio station in the area. With that occasion, he became a popular figure within his church, perhaps satisfying some of the narcissistic need of the group as their cultural selfobject.

However, what I found to be more remarkable was the expansion of his own sense of self, which was most apparent in his description of his experience of his parents' death. When his mother passed away 15 years ago, it was during the first few years of his immigration. He experienced her death almost as an annihilation of part of himself, almost like a surgical removal of a part of him. He cried all the way to Korea on the airplane; then, all through the several days of funeral, he constantly and painfully wailed. It was a distinctively painful memory for him. Being disconnected from his homeland must have been an experience that challenged his cohesive sense of self, and his mother's death devastated him by adding what I understood as a narcissistic wound, judging from his description of the pain he experienced: he likens her death to a surgical wound that signals his experience of his mother as his selfobject. It was a totally different experience when his father had passed away about three months prior to the interviews. This time, he

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<sup>25</sup> Phillis Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 114.

characterized his experience as peaceful. It was, as he describes it, an extra ordinary situation (read: God's arrangement, in his view) in which his father passed away on his mother's memorial day, while all family members were present for the ancestor's sacrificial ritual for her, except for Henry, who could only participate in the gathering through a phone conversation. Having talked to his father on the night he passed away, Henry felt blessed in this death. He said,

I used to think death is the end of everything. Even though my father did not believe in Jesus, did not accept Jesus Christ as his savior, I believe that he would be born again in the heaven and live there in peace thanks to the fact that I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior. As I thought so, I found my sadness reducing and I was able to be at peace. I used to fear death and the uncertainty about tomorrow made me worry, but this time, I found myself in peace. I thought this is peace from God.

Just as his mother could have been experienced as his selfobject, his language seems to reflect his experience of his father as his selfobject (maybe as a twinship transference) also. However, this time around, aided by his theological understanding, which his own church's evangelical soteriology would deny as untrue, he is able to expand his sense of self beyond the earthly realm and place his father in heaven. The sense of peace signals how deeply he integrated this understanding in himself. Henry's self growth seems to be in rapid progress of transmuting internalization which happens through constant testing out of his grandiosity and idealization through his testimonies and his internalization of his experiences. As I noted above, when he is in this process even in the form of talking to an interviewer, it seems to be a very much self-focused process explained quite seamlessly through the self psychological lens.

This process of building and adjusting the grandiose axis and idealizing axis in the spiritual self formation process seems to be an important process to maintain a

cohesive self when seen from self psychological perspective. Henry as seen above had experienced his mother's death as a fragmenting experience, while already dealing with the challenge of the immigration which could have given rise to intense need for mirroring: such challenge must have threatened the sense of continuity of his self. What I sense here is that Henry may have experienced a spiritual boost that made him feel spiritual grandiosity. This spiritual grandiosity seems to have led him to believe that his faith will allow his father to be in good place after death has brought back a new level of self-cohesion evidenced by his newly found peace.

As Oneil reflected on his long life journey, he often talked about his *O-Gi* (오기), self-centered stubbornness, that had been his source of energy and motivation. In the first interview, he identified *O-Gi* to be his motivation to start his 20-year journey of handwriting the Bible, which became to him almost like an "addiction." This addiction-like experience of his spiritual practice of Bible writing was in fact a self-formation process or his way of preparing for his own death. Funeral language and the language of legacy were prominent in his description of the practice. Seeing a Bible laid on the deceased in an open casket made him think he would like to have a Bible he hand-wrote in his casket, which he imagined to be a valuable lesson and legacy for his children. Half of his hand-written Bibles are given to his wife, children, relatives, and pastors, who will remember him through what he senses as a proud yet modest work. I understood how these handwritten Bibles could become almost like an alter ego, through his twinship selfobject transference, in which he invests himself and leaves behind after his death. But it took me awhile to understand what *O-Gi* was for him. It was only when this particular word showed up again in his narrative relative to his work as choir director. When he was

the choir director in his younger years in Korea, he directed a choir that was composed of factory laborers. It was not many years after the war, when music education was still a luxury; none of his choir members knew how to read the music. Oneil reflected quite proudly of the time when he asked his choir members if they wanted to take on a challenge to prepare an Easter Cantata, which was a complicated piece of music that was quite out of the league of his choir. The members agreed to prepare for it, with *O-Gi*, faithfully participating in the daily practice after work for several months. When they finally performed the Cantata on Easter, they sang it beautifully, which was clearly the fruit of their faithful practice and the result of their united sense of *O-Gi*, a defiant persistence that overcame the seemingly impossible. As he reached this point, he stopped talking for a moment then smiled at me with tears in his eyes. He continued, “As we sat down, the whole choir began to cry. Then the whole congregation cried with us. We had the true resurrection experience.” Then I realized that what he calls *O-Gi* is in fact the very claiming of empowerment, a spiritual power boost, in moments of possible fragmentations. It is the glue that holds his self together during the most fragmenting moments: when he and his family had to escape his homeland in North Korea due to the communist regime that took his family’s estate and declared his family the *bourgeois*, the enemy of the people; when he had to run away from the communist guerrilla band on the road while performing a spying mission; when he had to work in an American factory as a new immigrant, and so on. I interpret his narratives about his experiences as following: those moments when he poured his efforts into seemingly impossible tasks in life situations that could crush him into fragments, *O-Gi* prevented him from fragmenting and kept his sense of self cohesive. It was the source of his resilience, the context of his



encounter with God.

While Kohut's theories pay much attention to the archaic selfobjects related to one's parents, he did not talk much about how children can function as the selfobjects of the parents. Mina's spiritual struggle can be interpreted to be an illustration of such selfobject experiences. When she realized her second son was blind, she found a terrifying mirroring in her blind baby: she saw her sinfulness mirrored in her son, a fragmenting experience in which her past identity as a "good Christian Mina" collapsed. She notices that such collapses are very common when parents find disability in their children. She reports that she sees two kinds of parental reaction to the children's disabilities: one that collapses and gives up and the other that passionately fights for their children. Her journey from such fragmentation that made her feel collapsed to the other side is marked by her persistent questioning of God, asking the very question that made her feel fragmented, namely "why me?" When the possible answer to that question lay in her shortcoming, her own sin, or in God's intention to train her, the answer that empowered her was God telling her, "you are mine" and "so is your son." Here her self is elevated toward grandiosity as God's chosen, which was a necessary process in her achievement of a sense of continuity and self-cohesion.

Daniel's possible fragmentation moment was when his former church had conflicts within leadership. While he did not share the details of the conflict, he found the challenge of seeing the conflict to be anxiety provoking. As he and his wife both grew up in the church, his respected leader's departure as the result of the conflict was a threat to his sense of continuity. However, this did not turn into such fragmentation, but into a beginning of a new chapter in his life. He found himself ready to face new challenges:

I felt like their [his leaders'] training was imbedded inside of me, and it was time for me to step away, so. (So it was a, you had that sort of security in you. "I can be on my own.") Yeah, it made sense. When it happened, oh wow, this is the opportunity, this is what we've been trained for. So it wasn't like I was so devastated by the leaders leaving, oh well, it was just opportunity.

When he made the transition to his current church, this transition was a step away from the leadership role that he had built up in his former church. Interestingly, in his new church, he had another young man approaching him, sharing with him many vulnerable stories from his own life, which was both a surprise for him and an affirmation of his the continuity of his self, which was, to Daniel, God's affirmation of who he is.

He said, "Daniel you are just like genuine. Like there is nothing about you that's fake," and he said, what did he say, something about leadership, he said, "you might not think that you are a leader here," because I'm so new. He says, "but you already have made an impact and I already see you as a leader of this church."

So far, I have examined the manifestation of the self-formation process according to the perspective of self psychology. What I argued here is that spiritual experiences can provide opportunities for a person to cast selfobject transference on people and God to get mirrored by the sacred they experience that results in the development of grandiosity and sometimes to find their idealizing selfobject in God or in the Bible. In this experience, the subjectivity of the Bible is experienced as the transcendent; relationally such subjectivity is distant from the experience of others who are observing that particular relationship.

### **Understanding Spiritual Transformation through Relational Cultural Theory Lens**

The self-formation process, the process of growth, has marks of transformation that sacred moments leave behind. In the relationships between the Bible reader and the Bible, those moments are usually relational, characterized by what relational cultural

theory recognizes as growth-fostering connections. Such growth-fostering connections have several characteristics. First, as Jean Baker Miller and Irene Stiver observed, “mutual empathy and mutual empowerment in relationships are central to psychological growth.”<sup>26</sup> Fueled by mutual empathy and empowerment, secondly, the formation process, or the developmental process reaches the maturity marked by “increasing levels of complexity, fluidity, choice, and articulation within human relationships.”<sup>27</sup> Indeed complexity plays an important role in forming such maturity: Walker and Rosen notice that maturity is achieved in the context of “increasingly complex relationships and psychological health is viewed as a function of participation in relationships in which mutually empowering connection occur.”<sup>28</sup> Third, thus growth-fostering connections incubate such complex relationships which can be characterized as messy: according to Walker and Rosen, they are “thickly textured, revealing not only movements of intimacy, clarity, and courage, but also the patterns of disconnection, ambivalence, and uncertainty in the relationship.”<sup>29</sup> Fourth, conflicts and differences are part of the growth-fostering connections. In complex relationships acute conflicts are also inevitable and useful response for growthful change. Maureen Walker observes, “to experience connection is to participate in a relationship that invites exposure, curiosity, and openness to possibilities.”<sup>30</sup> Within this relationship, safety from contempt and humiliation needs to be guaranteed, but difference needs to surface and may even result in conflict, which leads to clarity of one’s being in relationships. Walker notes, “How differences are

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<sup>26</sup> Walker and Rosen, 42. Add: Citing Miller and Stiver...

<sup>27</sup> Judith Jordan, Alexander Kaplan, Jean Miller, Irene Stiver and Janet Surrey, *Women’s Growth In Connection: Writings from the Stone Center* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), 60.

<sup>28</sup> Walker and Rosen, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Walker and Rosen, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Walker and Rosen, 9.

treated is a telling indicator of the quality of connection – that is, the text to which an encounter embodies or engenders an increased sense of worth, clarity, zest, and desire for more relationship.”<sup>31</sup>

Kathy’s relationship with the Bible is characterized by powerful mutual empathy between her and God, who spoke to her through the Bible. Her encounter with Matthew chapter 5 happened one day as she read through the Bible app on her smartphone that displays daily meditation Bible verses. When she read Matthew 6:25-34, she found that God understood her core struggle: she worries extensively, a habit of heart that is rooted in her insecure childhood smudged by her parent’s divorce that had much to do with their financial struggle as immigrants to a foreign land. These worries that she finds to be deeply engraved in her psyche created a controlling image that she has to have financial stability in order for her to be happy. She says that if friends ask her “would you rather marry the guy you love and have no money or would you rather marry a guy who is financially stable,” she would say, “Financially stable.” This she recognizes as her deep worries about financial situation, which wracked her family once. She notices that such worries are indeed now very much part of her, which seems like something she lives with daily. What moved her deeply were biblical passages that touched her with deep empathy with her own struggle:

Oh my gosh, and automatically, that's my life style, I worry a lot. Automatically that became my favorite verse... At first I was reading it, I read that, and I just put it down, and I was like speechless. I was like sitting there and Oh my gosh! I forget that God knows everything. That's why that part when he says, you know, don't worry about tomorrow, because each day already has a problem of its own. He's reminding us, don't worry because you are already going through so much each day. That's what meant me more like not broke me, but it made me more, it softened my heart. Because he said you already have enough problems of your own. Just that part of it, he knows. (So you felt understood.) Yes. That's why it

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<sup>31</sup> Walker and Rosen, 9.

was comforting. I was just like, I don't even know what I was thinking. The time I was like oh my gosh. It says, "each day already has problems of its own." that part. Even the birds do. He was like, you know, aren't you guys better than the birds? They don't worry about what food they are going to eat, because he knows, because the heavenly father feeds them. Here it is (finding the verse on the app): Each day has enough trouble of its own. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself, each day has enough trouble of its own." I was like, that's right, I'm better than those birds. It says, "aren't you much more valuable than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life." it's just, worrying is a big problem, because you worry because you don't have enough trust in God. But I forget that because you know, I'm the type that needs to see things happening before me for me to actually believe and stuff.

Her tendency to worry about the next bill right at the moment when she is paying the current bill in full is understood in this passage. Instead of telling her to cut off her worries, this passage tells her to limit the amount of worries by doing it by daily doses, a doable practice for her. She was empathized about her daily struggle in a profound way, and such empathy empowered her to understand who God is for her. God values her and does not think little of her excessive worries, because God understands her. She saw that she is definitely more valuable than the birds in the air. In return for the deep empathy she received from God, she understands how much God loves her, and understanding that God wants her to have. This mutual empathic moment energized her: she talks to her friends about this encounter, it overflows into other interactions she has with others, especially to the high school students at church, whose trouble she deeply understands.

This was a very sacred experience for Kathy. Given at a time when she was coming out of a deep slump in which she tried unsuccessfully to fill her sense of emptiness with activities by going out to clubs and dancing the nights away, this encounter with the Bible gave her an opportunity to build a connection with the Bible that was different from what she experienced before. She had already left the church and the Bible once, not feeling connected or even feeling exhausted at the demand of the church

to teach the Bible to children, when she herself was feeling spiritually discontented. This encounter, in her mind, is a continuation of God's loving persuasion that continued even while she was hitting rock bottom. She had wondered how God had shown her God's love, and she concludes that she had been loved through relationships with people, who she understood as God-sent. While she was seeking to fill her sense of emptiness dancing in the clubs, she met her best friend from elementary years and connected with her. Through that relationship she came to have a better sense of her dissatisfaction, which they shared, and they together gradually moved away from club, to coffee houses, and then to church. This love of God, she recognized in the friendship with her friend, crystalized in her encounter with the Matthew passage. Finally in her understanding of God's empathy, she empathized God, accomplishing a sense of mutual empathy. This mutually empathic moment energized her: her relational horizon expanded significantly. Instead of the numbness, her friends notice hopefulness and peace in her. More than anything, she is well connected to her peers, not as "nice but dumb," which characterized her strategy of disconnection during her teenage years stained with the pain from her parent's divorce, but as a vibrant person full of energy. She especially proactively builds relationships with troubled high school students at church, whose trouble she deeply understands. This movement of heart that she found in the encounter became a transformative moment, as she found a mutually empathic moment with the subjectivity of the Bible, the imminent experience of God.

It is interesting to note that Henry, who has theologized his self growth in terms that inflated his grandiosity when seen from self psychology viewpoint, actually experiences the growth moments in an intimate relationship that resonates more with

RCT's understanding of connection. Henry's most intimate relational moments happen in his meditation on the given week's sermon text, which becomes the base text for the small group meeting he leads. In his preparation for this meeting and in his own devotion, he comes back to meditate on the same text every day and excavate deeper meaning each time. During the week of our first interview, the text that he was meditating on was 2 Timothy 4:1-5. He uses Revised New Korean Standard Version, when he mediates in Korean. The first verse states, "나는 하나님 앞과, 산 사람과 죽은 사람을 심판하실 그리스도 예수 앞에서, 그분의 나타나심과 그분의 나라를 두고 엄숙히 명령합니다." He found the verb in this sentence puzzling and engaged New International Version translation of this verse to decipher its meaning: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom. I give you this charge." During the first interview, he expressed his excitement in finding the word "charge" in this English translation that aided his understanding of the Korean translation "명령합니다." After he consulted the dictionary for the word, he recognized how this term can be used as a legal term: a judge would use his legal authority to charge someone to do something. During the first interview, he explained how important it is to utilize the dictionary that helped him find this exciting meaning. From self psychological point of view, I interpreted this excitement as his joy of connecting his intellectual finding to his past, a joy that comes from confirming the continuity of his self. However, during the second interview, I found that he moved into a relational space in his meditation. Now the verb inspired him to imagine himself in being in relation to God, who is speaking through Paul in this passage.

The question in the Bible study asks, what kind of attitude does Paul have in this passage? The simple answer would be a solemn attitude. But I get to wonder,

“what does it mean to be solemn?” It’s an attitude one has in front of, not before anyone else other than, not in front of a friend, not in front of a brother, but in front of God. When a president is inaugurated, he swears solemnly before the nation. Just like that, we are swearing solemnly in front of God, in front of Jesus Christ. Imagine how solemn one would be if that happens. Paul is giving Timothy a message with such solemn attitude. This is what I meditated on (Then, it sounds like you imagined yourself to be in front of God and wondered how it would feel?) Yes, that’s what I did. (You used your imagination.) Yes, when I did, I felt exhilarated and found the meaning of this passage. This led me to think about what would the word, charge, mean in this context.

This seemingly power-over image of God as the powerful being to feel solemn just to be in the presence developed into an image that he can empathize as a teacher. As he meditated on the word charge in continuation from the meditation of the week before, he began to connect it to a sermon in which obedience was defined as “appropriate response to authority.” When the judge charges, obedience follows as an appropriate response to the judge’s authority. This hierarchical thinking, when he explained more, turned out to have a very relational assumption. He reflects on his role as high school teacher to understanding this authority and obedience.<sup>32</sup>

When I used to advise the seniors in high school, advising them on their choices of college, I used to do a lot of research for each of the students. The student’s aptitude, skills, grade, family background, everything became my reference in advising them in their choice of college. There are teachers who wouldn’t do that. Sometimes, the parents try to influence this process by asking me to guide their sons to certain schools, like make him choose Jung-Ang University, or make him choose Han-Yang University. Here I want to tell you what an appropriate response to authority would look like. Let’s say that the student has an uncle who is a high school teacher. And he is advising seniors. Or maybe the student’s aunt is a teacher in another school. Wouldn’t the family meet together repeatedly to decide this student’s academic path? The parents will ask the opinions of this uncle and aunt and explore various options. But at the last moment, the student will listen to the advising teacher. I’ve advised my own nephew: he didn’t listen to me. But when I am the advising teacher and the student is with me in the counseling room for a guidance counseling, this student will listen to me. I have

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<sup>32</sup> In Korean high schools, instead of students going into the classrooms where the given subject is taught, the teacher of different subjects come and teach in the classroom where the class members spend their whole day of school. For these classrooms, there is an advising teacher, who is responsible for their guidance. Henry is talking about his role as such an advising teacher.



the authority.

This authority he saw in himself is an authority that grew from his constant interaction with the student, which entails his ardent investment in their interest. When there is such a relational grounding, he claims, authority can have an appropriate response, obedience. What was remarkable in this vignette was how God was not experienced as an overpowering being who subdues him, but a being that he as a human person can empathize with. He is saying, I can understand what kind of authority God has: just like my students understood what kind of authority I had. The student's response to him was based on his own choice as the student can have "obeyed" to other family members in making his academic choice. Thus, this authority in fact has a strong element of mutuality, investment of understanding on both parties. Henry brings this experience to understand God's authority, bringing his choice and empathic understanding of God to come to choose obedience, an appropriate response given God's investment in him. This moment of mutuality in his meditation is "so good" that he repeatedly uses this description; his tantalizing attempts to describe his indescribable feeling. From my perspective, it is clearly zest, one of RCT's five good things that growth-fostering connection provides. Indeed, because he finds layer after layer of meanings, he compares his relationship with the Bible with an onion, as each peeling of understanding brings about another new meaning, which motivates him to come back to the Bible over and over again.

The connections that he found in his relationships with the Bible expand beyond this particular relationship and reach the community that he is part of. At one point, I asked him if his role as the small group Bible study leader changed his devotion in any way. Henry notes the difference between meditating for his own sake, and mediating for

the sake of the group. It turns out that what fed his grandiose self, namely the making of the devotional notes and other accomplishments such as multiple times of reading the whole Bible, contribute to this process of meditating for the group. He says,

If I am meditating for my own sake, I didn't need to organize my meditational material in the way I did. I could just read the Bible and be thankful for what I receive. But as I have the role of the leader, I found my devotion reaching deeper level. In other words, I think I was a smaller vessel when I did it for myself only, so the grace I received was fitting to the size of that smaller vessel. However, as I begin to lead the group, I found that my words needed to be accountable to avoid being skewed, which motivated me to meditate so much more. For example I realized that my group members would bring different perspectives: some would think with worldly perspectives and some would think from a godly perspective. If one looks at a red flower, some will say it has bright red color and some will say it is a dark red. The grace coming from meditation on the Word of God can differ just like that. So I have to become a bigger vessel that can contain all those different perspectives.

Here Henry shows his perception of his self, which is carried in the metaphor of vessel, has expanded: now he is more capable to accommodate different perspectives and still remain empathic to others. In fact, it is Henry's commitment to listen to the different perspectives and to gauge the need of the group in his service to the small group and the choir. Empowered by the engagement with the Bible, he strives to connect with people around him to empower those as well. Through his presentation, I identify all five good things of growth-fostering connection, namely the sense of zest, his ability to take action in relationships, clearer understanding of the self and others, increased sense of worth, and desire to connect beyond the particular relationship.

Amy's experience of her encounter with Deuteronomy 27:16 is also very interesting seen from RCT's perspective. She read this passage as part of her devotional exercise. This passage is part of the narrative in which Moses divided the twelve tribes into two groups, letting one of them stand on Mount Gerizim to announce the blessings

and the other on Mount Ebal to announce the curses. This verse was one of the curses that were announced, namely: “Cursed is anyone who dishonors their father or mother. Then all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’” In her meditation, she focused on the Korean word that translated “dishonor”: 경홀히. This word has the connotation of “treating lightly” or even “despise,” which touched Amy deeply. Interestingly, while Amy mourned for having dishonored her father in her interaction with him, she did not dwell on the fear of being cursed, in spite of the “powering-over” possibility that the language of curse carries. It almost felt as if she skipped over the word “curse” and concentrated on “dishonor”: she felt pained for having hurt the feelings of God and her father. Therefore, her emotions were not fear but remorse, a regret for hurting the relationship. In her confession, she restored her deep love for her father, which was contaminated with her feeling burdened by his interference or various favors that he asked of her when she wanted to concentrate on her own children and work. This Biblical encounter resonated with her desire for reconnection with her father. Thus, she took this curse as an opportunity to introspect and found the courage to reconnect with him, summoning her motivations through a powerfully moved heart.

Amy encountered in this passage her father. She feels his “small” presence when he brings laundry to her messy child-rearing house as an excuse to take another look at his caring daughter and her children. The word “경홀히 (lightly)” signaled not just her attitude but also the subjective experience of her father who risked being treated lightly by her to come for a respite of connection. This empathic knowing caused her heart to ache. Not the fear of curse but a reconnection to the past experience where she now has a clearer understanding of her father’s heart—that is what allows her heart to move. In

Relational cultural terms, the lost opportunity for mutuality and connection was what she recognized in her biblical encounter, because here, she sensed the text recognizing her experience and pain, a poignant empathy from the text that she regards as sacred to her.

Relational cultural theory offers a conceptualization that describes such movement. Linda Hartling identifies different movements within the dynamic of shame that leads to disconnections, which includes “moving toward,” “moving against,” and “moving away from,” which function as strategies of disconnection.<sup>33</sup> For example, when people experience shame, some will use moving away strategy by “withdrawing, silencing themselves, or making themselves invisible,”<sup>34</sup> yet some will utilize moving toward strategy by silencing some part of their feelings and “appease or please the other to secure the relationship or just to survive.” Moving against strategy would involve “directing anger, resentment, and rage against those whom they believe to be the cause of their shame or humiliation.” In her clinical work with a client struggling with shame, she finds another movement, which Judith Jordan identifies as “moving with,” which happens when the therapist allows herself to be moved by and with the client, mutually empathizing with each other.<sup>35</sup> Here the therapist’s authenticity and vulnerability is put on the table very openly, being a resource for the client to build trustworthy relationships. Such empathy becomes an antidote to such difficult wounds as shame, which is deeply rooted in a person’s cultural history as well as in the individual’s relational history. The relational experience of the Bible, where empathy becomes the central element in the

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<sup>33</sup> Hartling, Rosen, Walker and Jordan, “Shame and Humiliation: From Isolation to Relational Transformation,” in *The Complexity of Connection: Writings from the Stone Center’s Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*, ed. Judith Jordan, Maureen Walker and Linda Hartling (New York: Guilford, 2004), 111.

<sup>34</sup> Hartling, Rosen, Walker and Jordan, 109-10.

<sup>35</sup> Hartling, Rosen, Walker and Jordan, 124.

movement of the heart, as we saw in the above cases, this “moving with” happens, building a powerful platform for further transformation in more relationships. This marks the spiritual dynamic of the biblical encounters that these interviewees experience as transformative.

In this first part of current chapter, I have examined the experience of spiritual growth and changes that were induced through the relationships with the subjectivity of the Bible experienced by the interviewees by conversing with self psychology and relational cultural theory. Such transformation happens around roughly two kinds of experiences, one being the growth through selfobject experience of grandiosity when the subjectivity of the Bible is engaged as transcendent and the other being the growth experienced through the movement of the heart, which resembles the experience of growth fostering relationships marked by mutual empathy. In the next part of this chapter, spiritual transformation will be examined from the perspective of spirituality, with attention given to cultural aspects.

## **PART 2. TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY:**

### **TOWARD ITS CULTURAL DIMENSION**

#### **Psychology and Spirituality**

I define spirituality as the experience of glimpsing at the sacred and the relationship resulting from this experience. My understanding stems from both my Christian formation and my relational experiences: my theological conceptualization that understands such experience as a human experience lies in my understanding of creation according to the first two chapters of Genesis, while my experiential knowing points to the relationships as the location where the glimpsing at the sacred can happen. I use the

language of glimpse, because the experience of the sacred never seems to be able to catch the sacred as the whole: human experiences are always limited by the contexts, the experiences and the personality of the person involved in it. The language of seeing through the reflection on the mirror, as in 1 Corinthians 13 seems to be a fitting metaphor for such spirituality: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12, NRSV).” What I call glimpse is not always a visual experience: it happens in its own particular ways according to situations. In my own experience, the moment of glimpse is sometimes experienced as a realization that comes as an afterthought or sometimes an exhilarating bodily experience that touches my whole being. The glimpse is also experienced as a sustaining energy that keeps us going and growing.

The act of glimpsing involves recognition and a context. Theologically, I ground my notion of spirituality on the creation theology of Imago Dei, according to the Genesis chapter 1 account where human beings are created after the image of God, or according to the Genesis chapter 2 account where the divine action of breathing into the nostril of the human body is how human life is given. Seeing the image and breath as divinely given gifts to humankind, I see that spirituality is part of human existence whether we are conscious of it or not. When standing in relation to others, spirituality becomes an act of recognizing the image or breath of God in them. In my observation, this spirituality of image and breath seems to belong to a vulnerable yet life-filled part of our human experience. In my clinical ministry, I often sensed liveliness springing in the midst of vulnerability revealed within the context of safe relationship. The spirituality as the image of God or the breath of God seems to reside in such vulnerability, yet when such

vulnerability sometimes becomes the spring of life. In my experience, when such vulnerability finds way to manifest within the connection formed in relationship, there is an experience of the presence of the sacred, whether the persons involved regard themselves as religious or spiritual. When I have a glimpse at the vulnerability turning into resilience and continuing to mature, I find myself touched deeply. As I have been humbled by witnessing of such sacred events, I came to see spiritual growth and maturity as something that has to do with the way we handle our vulnerability in the context of relationships.

Thanks to the criteria I used to find my interviewees, which were "those who had diligently interacted with the Bible," my interviewees were rather mature in their spiritual growth, sometimes quite remarkably. They demonstrated spiritual leadership in their given places and were conscious of the changes that they experienced in their relationships to the Bible. In the previous section, I have identified development of grandiosity and empathic connection as two different psychological dynamics in their transformative spiritual experiences. However, such psychological dynamics are only one layer of the experience. In the part 1 of this chapter, even while using the relational cultural theory's conceptualization to understand the relational dynamic, I have not sufficiently engaged the cultural dynamic, which was very much at work. Among many possible layers of the cultural dynamics, I would like to identify the issue surrounding the separate self and relationships, which was the very issue central to the debate between self psychology and RCT. Approached from a different cultural background, it is noticeable that the two psychological dynamics reveal a unique layer that touches upon

the spirituality of Korean American Christians on a distinctive level. Such spirituality also reveals cultural and political implication when explored further.

To move into the subject of spirituality from that of psychology, let me explore the history of the intersection between psychological studies and spirituality, which reveals that the tug-of-war between the separate self and relationships is also part of the conceptualization of spiritual experiences. Mirroring relational cultural theory's criticism of the individualized tendency of psychology that emphasized the separate self, when the field of the study of spirituality engages psychology in its interdisciplinary practice, it also seems to have a tendency to focus on the spiritual experience of the separate self with much focus on the transcendent function of spirituality rather than giving attention to the imminence of the sacred present in oneself and others.

Since the turn of the twentieth century, there has been a long-standing dialogue between psychology and those interested in spirituality. As both psychology and spirituality address the human inner dynamic, the insights coming from both disciplines have potential to contribute to each other, but the flow of the conversation has shifted "from hostility to rivalry, to mutual cooperation, and to mutual respect" as Janet Ruffing describes in her survey of this relationship.<sup>36</sup> While pastoral theologians and pastoral psychologists have diligently engaged psychology for their understanding of human inner dynamics, the interest in spirituality from psychologists has had some ups and downs. David Perrin uses the case of transpersonal psychology to illustrate a rather unsuccessful marriage between psychology and spirituality in his analysis of the relationships between Christian spirituality and human science. Transpersonal psychology, which explicitly

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<sup>36</sup> Janet Ruffing, "Personality Sciences," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 308.



studies the spiritual experiences of individuals, focuses on the goal to find a universal notion of transcendence. Perrin sees three factors contributing to such development: “modern humanism, which exalts the sovereign value of the individual,” a reaction “against a Western religious imagination that was problematically dominated by Christianity,” and “the widespread encounter with various Asian mystical practices and perspectives.”<sup>37</sup> For me, it is interesting that Asian mystical practices, which have their deep roots in collectivist societies, contributed to transpersonal psychology that has such individualistic focus.

However, such attention to the spiritual experience within a separate self was not the final word of psychology when it attended to spiritual human experiences. Another branch of psychology that has explicit interest in spirituality is positive psychology. In positive psychology, the split between foci on self-transcending spirituality and relational spirituality seems to form two major streams of understandings of human spirituality. While there is much social psychological research published regarding various aspects of spirituality, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and George Valliant construct a comprehensive understanding of spiritual maturity from positive psychological perspectives through their books, *The Evolution of the Self: A Psychology for the Third Millennium* and *The Wisdom of Ego*, respectively. Since these theories of spirituality have not been dealt with within the pastoral and practical theological reflection, I will use this space to explain their theories. Through this exploration, I want to articulate the conceptualization of spiritual maturity by these two positive psychologists, as an articulation of the experience of the ongoing glimpsing of the sacred through the reflection seen through psychology. These

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<sup>37</sup> David Perrin, “The Uneasy Relationship Between Christian Spirituality and the Human Sciences: Psychology as a Test Case,” *Spiritus* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 181-82.

psychological conceptualizations of spiritual maturity offer complexity as an integral element of spiritual growth, which I think is often missing in the conceptualization of spiritual growth that I encountered in my evangelical upbringing. However, such complexity seems to be more in line with my interviewees' narratives, while they have not named complexity as an element of their spirituality. I will first describe their concepts in detail and point out the parallel elements found in my interviewees. Then later in this chapter, the complexity will be described more in detail as part of the interpretative work of this practical theological reflection.

Csikszentmihalyi, in *The Evolving Self*, places spirituality in the context of human evolution. For evolution to happen, first, human selves, as organisms aiming to adapt to the changing world of the future, need to evaluate the environment correctly to adapt to it efficiently. Secondly, we need to evaluate who are the fittest that compete with us to survive the evolution process. Third, it is essential to know what adds to the complexity of the evolution process. Then the evaluation process leaves us with a limited number of options to help our evolution move forward. This section will follow these steps to get to Csikszentmihalyi's notion of T-person, the possible result of this evolution process, which I interpret to be a spiritually mature person.

Human brains mysteriously deceive the selves and distort the reality. Csikszentmihalyi uncovers the lies of the brain to reveal the reality that hinders optimal human functions. He calls these illusions the veils of Maya, a term borrowed from Hindi. The first element of the veils of Maya is the world of the genes. Our genes are programmed with chemical instructions that limit our experience of the world. "These

instructions are solidly embedded in the brain and their effects are automatic.”<sup>38</sup> Our genes are constructed to survive the reality of our ancestors, who had to lead their lives in the wild. Our genes instruct us to search for food when hungry, to defend ourselves when attacked, and to be interested in the opposite sex so as to increase the possibility of procreation of the offspring. For the hunters and gatherers, these instincts engraved in our genes were essential for survival, but in our contemporary world, this genetic information can give us impulses without specific target action that leads us to our survival. Thus, knowing the source of these impulses can be the first step in gaining control of our psychic energy. By knowing it, we lift up one veil of Maya and see the reality more clearly.

The second veil of Maya is the world of culture. Our identity is culturally defined. The survival skills that the genes could not teach us are learned through our culture, and thus we are tied tightly to our culture. Cultural loyalties seem to push us to act for the greater good of our bigger selves, but there lies beyond this veil a bigger kind of us, the human kind, and there is also the lesser kind of us, who are marginalized within our culture. Once this reality is acknowledged, it becomes possible to lift up the second veil to see what is left.

The third veil of Maya is the world of the self. Until human beings became capable of using symbols to express themselves, the physical existence of the person was contained in the self. However, as the symbolic system allowed people to express themselves, people began to identify themselves with objects as a way of expanding their selves. Csikszentmihalyi sees the self's fragility in this human attempt for growth: “The

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<sup>38</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Evolution of the Self: A Psychology for the Third Millennium*. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), 64.

problem is that the more the ego becomes identified with symbols outside of the self, the more vulnerable it becomes.”<sup>39</sup> The third veil of Maya works by providing an illusion that the self needs things to support the image of the self. This happens within relationships, too. While human relationships are sound bases on which to expand one’s image of the self, too often the hand that we extend to others to help or protect is the hand that tries to control the other or a demonstration of the power of the self.<sup>40</sup> For Csikszentmihalyi, the escape from this illusion requires the self’s growth into independence from others and other things to fulfill one’s need.

By uncovering the veils of Maya, this reality of the environment is evaluated, which leaves the evaluation of the fittest competitor in this environment as the next task. Power the selves use to control the given resources is always unevenly distributed. However, it is a matter of choice whether the control over resources should become a matter of exploiting others. Csikszentmihalyi identifies three forms of exploitation; that of predator, parasites, and pretender. For the appropriate channeling of our psychic energy, it becomes necessary to recognize those who exploit or drain our psychic power and know how much they drain.<sup>41</sup>

According to Csikszentmihalyi, the stage of evolution is populated by other competitors, what he calls memes, which exploit our psychic energy. A meme is “any permanent pattern of matter or information produced by an action of human intentionality.... At the moment of its creation, the meme is part of a conscious process directed by human intentionality, but immediately after a meme comes into existence, it

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<sup>39</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 79.

<sup>40</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 81.

<sup>41</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 114.

begins to react with and transform the consciousness of its creator, and that of other human beings who come into contact with it."<sup>42</sup> As a human invention, meme is different from our ancestors' biological competitors, but in many ways it resembles the behaviors of our genes in evolutionary process. Memes compete with each other for human psychic energy, and the one that requires the least survives. While memes are created to benefit their creators, once they are created, they evolve on their own, independent from the intention of the creator. The development of automobile shows how the simple mechanism of the first steam engine meme survived and evolved on its own: now destruction of entire human civilization may be more conceivable than human kind without automobiles.<sup>43</sup> Memes, whether they are abstract concepts or concrete material products, engages our psychic energy through its evolution process, which progresses beyond our conscious control. Understanding human cultural heritages as memes, Csikszentmihalyi puts us in perspective in the broadest scheme of our own world, which informs us that what looks like our innocent servants that facilitate our own evolution are in fact powerful agents competing with us in the evolution process.

Upon the understanding of our outer reality as he examined it thus far, he adds the sad but obvious reality of entropy, which we must consider before we examine the direction to which our evolution is heading. Without concentrating our psychic energy toward a conscious goal, our world is constantly falling apart because it is governed by the principle of entropy. In this entropic world, where we compete with ourselves, with our memes, and against natural force, it becomes obvious that the only chance for the survival of future humankind depends on finding resources for the self in something that

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<sup>42</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 120.

<sup>43</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 140.

is not scarce but available to everyone: his or her own self. Directing one's life utilizing this inner resource becomes possibly the only option that humankind has in directing our evolution. Thus, flow becomes crucial in the evolution of the self. Flow, an experience of total engagement of the self, provides the "sense of excitement of finding out something new about oneself or the excitement about the possibility of interacting with the many opportunities that the environment offers."<sup>44</sup> The following sums up the characteristics of flow experience<sup>45</sup>: starting with certain set of skills, one sets clear goals, decisively engaging with the given challenge. While in flow, the mind merges actions and thoughts into an acute concentration on the task, losing self-consciousness and sense of time, but the self maintains the sense of control because the challenges are "high enough to absorb all of the person's skill"<sup>46</sup> and give immediate feedback. Flow experience is extremely rewarding: there is a sense of discovery of new challenges that leads us to use new skills, which makes the activity more "interesting and gratifying."<sup>47</sup> In flow, there is a sense of advancement, which is helpful precisely for the evolution process. As flow advances through complicating the challenges of activities, it leads the self to complexity.

Flow in itself can either participate in entropy or in harmony. "Harmony is usually achieved by evolutionary changes involving an increase in an organism's complexity, that is an increase in both differentiation and integration."<sup>48</sup> Csikszentmihalyi suggests the notion of transcender or the T-person as a model of the complex person "whose psychic energy is joyfully invested in complex goals."<sup>49</sup> In other words, T-persons are

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<sup>44</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 177.

<sup>45</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 178.

<sup>46</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 182.

<sup>47</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 189.

<sup>48</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 156.

<sup>49</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 208.

able to find flow in complex activities. T-persons are found in many cultures: the Confucian sages, Mahayana Bodhisattva, Christian saints, and so on. These persons are not restrained by the veils of Maya but rather possess wisdom which is “the chief characteristic of a complex self” and which is also a quality closely related to spirituality. According to him, spirituality “consists in effort to free consciousness from the thrall of genetic instruction.”<sup>50</sup> Such spirituality lets the T-person grow:

When people invest their psychic energy in the most universal goals—as do sages—and instead of striving only for personal gain they aim for a broader harmony, their selves begin to expand beyond the ego-centered mechanism that we inherit as part of our evolutionary heritage. Such a self grows to include goals beyond the limited, mortal frame of the body: thus it is less vulnerable to the threats that make others unhappy.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, these wise persons achieve perspectives that have the universe under its scope:

The wise enjoy being part of the powerful forces that blow through the universe, and that manifest themselves temporarily in the reality we know, in the body we own for a few short years. Being aware that the self is an illusion, they know not to take it too seriously. They relish being alive, but they perceive that there is more to life than the small part that is revealed to us, and that most men cling to so desperately. Flow is the usual condition of their existence; no wonder the rest of humankind envies their happiness.<sup>52</sup>

The T-person with this kind of wisdom and spirituality is engaged fully in the complex multi-dimensions of life, which can now include complex relationships and social engagements as part of the complex good. The understanding of the T-person sheds much light on my understanding of the transcendent spiritual experience. Henry’s and Mina’s self-absorbing joy of personal reflection, Oneil’s addiction-like process of handwriting the Bible, and Daniel’s empty feeling when he delivers testimonies of his God-experience all point to a process of flow, a process of reaching the maturity of the T-person. The

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<sup>50</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 240-41.

<sup>51</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 244.

<sup>52</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, 244.

autotelic quality of flow that a T-person would incorporate into harmonious existence seems to correspond to the healthy dose of narcissism that my interviewees needed to grow in their spirituality. The narcissistic grandiosity that I found to be an important part of the spiritual growth might very well translate into the T-personality as a model of a spiritually grown person. While the complexity of the self can certainly contain relational complexity, this model of spirituality sees the self as the locus of spiritual growth, reflecting more of the separate-self paradigm.

Another positive psychologist lays a bridge to expand the notion of spirituality from the separate-self paradigm into more relational understanding. George Vaillant, a research psychologist trained as psychiatrist, reinterprets the psychoanalytic construction of defense mechanism. The notion of defense mechanism, which was originally constructed by Sigmund Freud and further developed by his daughter Anna Freud, denoted the strategy that the unconscious employs to conceal intolerable psychic material from the conscious. Vaillant, in his book, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, argues persuasively for the heuristic value of this intuitive concept and reinterprets it through the analysis of the empirical data collected through the longitudinal adult developmental studies. Also, through studies of the biographical accounts of various persons, he illustrates the development and existence of the defense mechanism.

Unlike Freud's interpretation that renders the defense mechanism as a pathological result of the distortion of the human inner world, Vaillant argues that it is an organic process of ego formation, which the ego devises to protect itself from disintegration as the result of the intrapsychic conflict that it has to overcome to restore its psychic homeostasis. Unlike Freud, who claimed that defense mechanisms are totally



unconscious processes. Vaillant shows that defense mechanisms happen both in consciousness and unconsciousness; or, more correctly, they happen in the organic whole of the ego. Vaillant states, “defense mechanism is to mind what the immune system is to the body.”<sup>53</sup> To explain how defenses work, he diagrams the four “lodestars” of our mental construction, which are our desires, our conscience, important people we cannot live with or without, and reality, which is the lived experience. Any sudden change that disturbs the homeostasis of this construction can generate anxiety and depression. To deal with this new situation, ego either denies or distorts any one or any combination of the four lodestars to deceive itself, in order to find its homeostasis.

Vaillant categorizes the defenses into psychotic, immature, neurotic, and mature defenses. For my purpose in search for spiritual maturity, I will focus on the mature defenses. What distinguishes the mature defenses from the rest of them? Mature defenses, like suppression, sublimation, altruism, and humor, “elegantly balance and attenuate...reality, people, conscience, and desire.”<sup>54</sup> While immature defenses generally irritate the user or even lead to immoral or illegal actions, the mature defenses bring the user closer to harmony. In mature defenses, all the components of the four lodestars are allowed to be conscious, which makes the usage of the defense look voluntary albeit the efforts it may take, resulting in both positive self-conception of the user and positive impact on the user’s relationships with others. Vaillant notes “usually the development of mature defenses requires the loving intercession of or identification with another person,” echoing the experiences of selfobject transferences that my interviewees demonstrated. Through utilizing the defenses, mature defense users integrate the sources of conflict to

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<sup>53</sup> George Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 11.

<sup>54</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 67.

create something else: in Vaillant's description, "straw is spun into gold, despair is forged into poetry, and the whole is rendered greater than its parts."<sup>55</sup> The creative and beautiful ways through which mature defenses work are demonstrated through biographical accounts of the users of these defenses, like Anna Freud, Eugene O'Neill and many others. Mature spirituality is found in the manifestations of these mature defenses:

Mature defenses grow out of our brain's evolving capacity to master, assimilate, and feel grateful for life, living and experience. Such gratitude encompasses the capacity for wonder. To see and comprehend the joy of a sunset or a symphony or to sustain a mature religious conviction is evidence that one's mind has experienced a hallucination or an illusion of sorts. Such wonder is in itself a transformation and a self-deception of the most sublime nature.<sup>56</sup>

Such wonder is the very beginning point of spirituality, which springs from the ego's beautiful lie to itself in order to synthesize itself with the surrounding. How does this maturation of the ego happen? Vaillant argues that neurobiological factors, nurture, and environment all play into the ego maturation process, but assimilation plays an especially crucial role in the maturation process that can foster spiritual growth. Through his analysis of a longitudinal study data called "the Core City Sample" which followed white males from Boston inner-city schools, originally designed to study juvenile delinquency, Vaillant shows "what was most critical to resilience was not social support but the ability to internalize those supports." Assimilation is such internalizing of important relationships, which Piaget explains through his model of assimilation and accommodation, and Erik Erikson explains by his identity formation process that happens through gradual integration of all identifications that a person experienced. Vaillant

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<sup>55</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 67.

<sup>56</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 337.

names six forms of assimilation, namely incorporation,<sup>57</sup> introjection,<sup>58</sup> imitation,<sup>59</sup> internalization,<sup>60</sup> idealization,<sup>61</sup> and identification,<sup>62</sup> and each of them is crucial in different developmental processes, providing resources to the ego. Such capacity to internalize others comes from the ego's ability to distinguish between the self and the other: "confusion between self and other turns empathy into projection, and projection makes it impossible to grow through the presence of another person."<sup>63</sup> A 60-year-old man from the College sample, which longitudinally traced the cohort of Harvard University students who were sophomores 1939, was said to have rarely experienced love. Growing up in a broken family with an alcoholic father and a mother with manic-depressive illness, he was able to grow up to be a fully respected artist, and was able to ask wise and mature questions about Vaillant's studies. However, he was incapable of assimilating.<sup>64</sup> When he was asked if anyone ever touched his heart throughout his whole life, he answered, "I think no one. That is my character. It is a terrible thing." He has learned to cope with his dysfunctional family situation where no one was able to be

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<sup>57</sup> Incorporation denotes the least complete form of assimilation that Vaillant likens to indigestion. He offers the image of a boa constrictor that swallowed an un-metabolized elephant in *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry as a way to conceptualize incorporation.

<sup>58</sup> Introjection contrasts to incorporation that absorb the whole person as it only assimilates one aspect of the person. The phenomenon that Anna Freud named identification with the aggressor is a good example of introjection. The powerful aggressor is not what one wants to assimilate into oneself, yet in an undigested form the aggressor is assimilated into the self.

<sup>59</sup> Imitation is what happens in play or psychodrama. Like a child who imitates the parents learns to function more like the parents but such imitation does not necessarily lead to an enriched life.

<sup>60</sup> When we internalize others, we take their rules and roles inside and accept them consciously, but those rules and roles do not touch our souls. Internalization can begin to build our self-esteem, as it is a more solid form of assimilation than incorporation, introjection or imitation.

<sup>61</sup> Vaillant describes idealization as following: it "is first cousin to altruism and is associated with the capacity to manifest real empathy. Idealization is more mature than internalization and comes closer to achieving a complete synthesis of other people. Idealization involves duty less and gratitude more (350)."

<sup>62</sup> As a closely related concept of sublimation, identification is a way to assimilate another person in more "flexible, reversible, neutralized, differentiated, choice-determined way (351)." With proactive selection and motivation to do so, the digestion of the other person is selective and complete, creating a new ego structure that leads to growth.

<sup>63</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 333.

<sup>64</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 336.

present for him, and by age 60. Vaillant observes, “this man had given up all hope: he loved nobody, and he brooded glumly over his osteoarthritis. Vaillant observes in this man’s experience a deeper layer of human experience that the capacity to internalize others, or assimilate results in:

I wish to examine a thread that ran through the lives of many of the men as they mature, a thread of spiritual growth or for want of a better term, *religious wonder*. Others may prefer to call the process moral development. In some respects the cognitive ability to sustain paradox reflects the same higher order of psychic integration, as do some facets of deep religious conviction. But moral and cognitive developments are not enough. The 60-year-old College man had both, but he lacked faith and wonder. Other men in the study like O’Neill and Bill Penn who shared the hopeless College artist’s privation still managed to discover faith.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, finding spiritually mature person in the work of Vaillant leads one to search for the maturity of assimilation. Just like in defense mechanism, the ego can develop different strategies to assimilate those one loves, what in self psychology is called transmuting internalization. Then what is it that enabled the other men like O’Neill and Bill Penn from the College sample to discover faith and wonder? When the assimilation process is frustrated as in the case of the 60-year-old artist, the ego needs to have capacity for creativity, an ability to facilitate a virtual reality, which Vaillant calls “a way of supplementing and enhancing the love we have received.”<sup>66</sup> however small. This is the process of sublimation. Dreaming or maybe imagination, seeking sacred places that allows us to imagine and sustain paradox, play, and the ability to link idea and affect help us to develop a mature self-deception that sustains our ability to work through frustrations and feel grateful. In fact, when the growth process is frustrated, we find the ego grows new skills and capacity, if the ego can overcome such frustration by

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<sup>65</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 337.

<sup>66</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 338.

assimilating and sublimating it again and again. Vaillant says, "If sublimation is the most graceful example of adaptive accommodation<sup>67</sup> to the external world, just so identification is the most graceful example of assimilation of the external world."<sup>68</sup> Through the complex life experiences that offer conflicts and frustrations, the ego is expanded over and over again through this identification and sublimation process, when the ego successfully integrates the world around it. Thus, as Anna Freud wrote, "The Ego is victorious when its defensive measures....enable it to restrict the development of anxiety and 'pain' and so transform the instincts that, even in difficult circumstances, some measure of gratification is secured."<sup>69</sup>

This victorious, creative, humbling ego that can successfully use mature defenses reveal processes of spiritual maturity. While the ego-experience reflects the model of separate self, this self's main formation process appears in the context of the lodestars of desires, conscience, people, and reality, a very immanent reality of relationship. Here, I see a direction toward immanent spirituality, which manifests in relations, motivated by emotional interactions, as my interviewees showed me. As a matter of fact, this is exactly the direction Vaillant's later work headed. Building on this work on mature defenses, which is eventually intrinsically related to the emotional intelligence of the person, Vaillant expanded his understanding of spiritual maturity by weaving this understanding with findings of neuroscience, arguing that the positive and complex emotions such as faith, love, hope, joy, forgiveness, compassion and awe are part of evolutionally prudent

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<sup>67</sup> In another word, assimilation.

<sup>68</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 351.

<sup>69</sup> Vaillant, *The Wisdom of the Ego*, 264.

human development that contributes to human flourishing.<sup>70</sup> By pointing at the emotions like compassion, forgiveness, love, hope, joy, trust, awe and gratitude as the main elements of spirituality, his understanding of mature spirituality gives neuroscientific grounding for my understanding of the dynamic of movement of heart, which requires emotional knowing as its spiritual epistemology. While from a very different vintage point, these two positive psychological conceptualizations T-personality and mature defenses of assimilation and sublimation provide a very complex picture of spirituality that explains both the transcendent and imminent dimension of spirituality. Spiritual growth thus becomes a movement toward such complexity. In such conceptualization, spiritual transformation as experience of spiritual-growth moments functions as milestones toward spiritual maturity.

With such development toward a more relational understanding of spirituality within psychology, it is notable that relational cultural theory has not been used to explore spirituality yet. While many among the diverse array of definitions of spirituality point at its focus on transcendence, I also have found some definitions that quite solidly rest on relational understanding. For example, George Vaillant says, "Love is the shortest definition of spirituality I know."<sup>71</sup> Janet Ruffing goes in more detail as she defines Christian spirituality in terms of its relationality:

Christian spirituality is our way of being, the way we live our lives as a consequence of our experience of God in Jesus. It is how we respond to the "Holy" and how we express the implications of that experience in our relationship with ourselves, with others, with society, with the creation. It is a dynamic love relationship, responsive to the ultimate loving source of our being who desires for us fullness of life. It includes our reciprocation of that love by

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<sup>70</sup> George Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution: Scientific Defense of Faith* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008),

<sup>71</sup> Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*, 16.

our being loving, caring, justice-making inhabitants of our world, appreciators of this beauty and life.<sup>72</sup>

This definition has much room for complexity articulated by the positive psychologists, as the relationships as the context of the response to the holy can contain dynamic vicissitudes that ask for increasingly more complicated responses. In her definition, loving relationship as the crux of spirituality, the relationship or the connection that relational cultural theory regards as the location of growth can be translated into the location of spiritual growth as well. However, when some other definitions are invited into this conversation, I see that the cultural aspect of spirituality surfaces as another important element that needs to have a deeper layer of understanding. Consider the following definition of Christian spirituality offered by Lawrence Cunningham and Keith Egan:

Christian Spirituality is the lived encounter with Jesus Christ in the Spirit. In that sense, Christian Spirituality is concerned not so much with the doctrines of Christianity as with the ways those teachings shape us as individuals who are part of the Christian community who live in the larger world.<sup>73</sup>

In their conceptualization, behind such shaping is the tradition that shaped Christians, which is what Cunningham and Egan think is what the biblical language from the book of Hebrews calls “so great a cloud of witness.”<sup>74</sup> Given their agenda to lay out the spiritual traditions in the Western hemisphere in the latter chapters, this qualification of finding Christian spirituality in tradition is understandable. However, as a Korean Christian, part of a community in which Christianity has only a century's history, I found myself squeezed into the Western Christian tradition to find a spirituality model to define my spirituality, while I see other cultural elements strongly at work in my spiritual life.

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<sup>72</sup> Ruffing, 309.

<sup>73</sup> Lawrence Cunningham and Keith Egan, *Christian Spirituality: Themes from the Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 7.

<sup>74</sup> Hebrews 12:1 (NRSV).

Those cultural elements could be the second veil of Maya that Csikszentmihalyi points out that obstructs the optimal human function, but such cultural elements can also be the resource of spiritual resilience.

### **Spirituality of the Movement of Heart**

The western cultural phenomenon that associates Asian mysticism with the newly developed popular notion of spirituality is a recent one. If seen from this phenomenon's perspective, Confucianism seems particularly distant from the experience of spirituality, as its religiosity itself has often been doubted by many. According to Confucianism scholar Rodney Taylor, there were number of attempts to answer the question about Confucianism's religiosity by variously defining what "religion" is. Because of Confucianism's clear characteristics as "ethical system and humanistic teaching,"<sup>75</sup> the deeply religious characteristic of Confucianism is often overlooked. This is not surprising. Having grown up in a culture in which Confucianism is deeply engraved into everyday life, I found it not very difficult to identify Confucian elements in Koreans' daily decisions and behavioral patterns, even within my religious life within Christianity. The ethical codes are part of the way of life of my people, and with some study, those are directly traceable to Confucian classical literature. However, the religiosity is difficult to trace. During the 1990's, in my undergraduate research project, I found that the religiosity of Confucianism was researched by western scholars in terms of examining the practice of ancestor worship, with their central interest latching onto the concept of ghost (귀신, 鬼神). The ritualistic structure of those practices, as well as the similarity of the concepts of ancestral ghosts and the western concept of spirit, may have pointed toward

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<sup>75</sup> Rodney Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 2.



such understanding. However, I remember feeling that this was a very superficial approach that would turn out to be less than a satisfactory contribution to the understanding of Confucian religiosity. Something about Confucianism is deeply religious or even spiritual, but I sensed it was more than the ghosts of the ancestors. Whatever it was, it was supposed to be capable of transforming people, nurturing growth and maturity, which ancestor worship did not achieve on its own.

More or less serendipitously, and amusingly, I found the answer to my Confucian spirituality question in Korean TV dramas. There is a genre of TV dramas called *Sageuk* 사극(史劇), namely historically-based dramas, which feature historical characters from the past with historically grounded yet fictional schema. I found that transformative moments were often characterized by the main character's determination to adhere to an ethical principle, motivated by sincere commitment due to relational investment, even to the point his or her own life or safety would be at risk. This commitment often generated empathy from those surrounding the main character and even the opposing party, as he or she has moved the hearts of other people or even supposedly the heart of heaven. Such a theme echoed a familiar story line I was educated in as a child, which I trace back to *Samganghengsildo* (三綱行實圖), a publication from Joseon dynasty, that is meant to be a tool to teach the ethical values of Neo-Confucianism's moral codes.

*Samganghengsildo* was published in 1431 under King Sejong (世宗, 1397-1450)'s commission. It was designed as a publication that educated the general population. It has three parts, a chapter on filial respect to parents (孝子篇),<sup>76</sup> a chapter

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<sup>76</sup>삼강행실도(*Samganghengsildo*), 효자편 (Chapter on Filial Respect for Parents). (Seoul: 세종대왕기념사업회 King Se-Jong Memorial Foundation, 1982).

on loyalty to the king (忠臣篇),<sup>77</sup> and a chapter on women's chastity (烈女篇).<sup>78</sup> Each chapter contains biographies of 110 people who demonstrated each virtue. It includes illustration of each biography, which made its content accessible to the general population,<sup>79</sup> in spite of the fact that it was written in classical Chinese, which only higher classes could read. After much-easier-to-read Korean letters were created in 1446, King Seongjong (成宗, 1457-1494) had it translated into Korean and distributed it to each province with incentives to erect monumental gates for the women who proved to be exemplary in demonstrating each virtue. This book was published nineteen times throughout the *Joseon* dynasty, becoming the most frequently published book.<sup>80</sup> Because books written in Korean letters were rare and *Samganghongsildo* was abundantly available, it had tremendous impact on the moral sense of the general population, functioning like the multimedia of our time.

Each biography of *Samganghongsildo* is composed of a short narrative of the biographical account, a short stanza of poem that commends the character of the person that demonstrated the given virtue and a full-page illustration of the narrative to be viewed side by side with the narrative. The poem evaluates the actions of the character as a virtuous act and praises the sincere attitude with which this action was carried out

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<sup>77</sup>삼강행실도(*Samganghongsildo*), 중신편 (Chapter on Loyalty to King). (Seoul: 세종대왕기념사업회 King Se-Jong Memorial Foundation, 1982).

<sup>78</sup>삼강행실도(*Samganghongsildo*), 열녀편 (Chapter on Women's Chastity). (Seoul: 세종대왕기념사업회 King Se-Jong Memorial Foundation, 1982).

<sup>79</sup> *Joseon* dynasty's class system(반상제) was composed to 4 classes of yangban(양반), jungin(중인), yangmin(양민) and cheonmin(천민), when listed from upper class to lowest. Yangban was the class of the educated, political elite, only for whom was the path into governmental office positions were opened. When I say general population, I mean to denote the majority of the people, who belonged to the jungmin, yangmin and cheonmin class.

<sup>80</sup> Myung Hwan Kang, "<삼강행실도> - 약자에게 가해진 도덕의 폭력 (A Study on Samkanghaengsildo: Ethics' Violence Imposed on the Marginalized)" 한국고전연구 5, no. 21. (2002)

“moved the heaven (하늘, 天).” And sometimes, it could also move the surrounding people. Some of the accounts go to a great extreme, which is often difficult for my mind to wrap around, such as severing one’s finger to use the blood to cure one’s parents, or selling one’s child to provide for one’s parents. Also it is notable that it is mostly in the first part, namely in the chapter on filial piety, where the heaven is moved, but in the two latter chapters, it is often the people surrounding the main actor who would be moved or notice their action or remember his or her name. Sometimes, when the heaven is moved, other good blessings come along, such as food, wealth, medicine, career success, and so on.

To illustrate this, let me introduce one such episode. The following picture is from *Samganghensildo*, which shows the story of Wang Sang,<sup>81</sup> who was faithfully filial to his stepmother despite her mistreatment of him. This typical story that conveys Confucian spirituality teaches that Wang Sang’s filial piety moved the heaven (하늘, 天). Whenever his stepmother wanted something, he would try to get it for her. In the severe cold, he tried to get a fish for her by breaking the ice. Then she wants roasted sparrow. Then apple. When he makes his best effort to fulfill her wish, the heaven helps. Though he barely broke the ice, two big fish jumped out of the hole. When he tried to catch the sparrow she requested, a flock of them flew into his house. After his stepmother passed away, he was so exhausted by sadness he could not stand up. The brief commentary that accompanies the illustration admires his deep filial piety and states that the heaven was moved by his pure sincerity, resulting in nature responding to his effort and him getting a high government position in his later life. Reading this text, there is a distance I feel, but

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<sup>81</sup> 삼강행실도(*Samganghensildo*), 효자편 (Chapter on Filial Respect for Parents). (Seoul: 세종대왕기념사업회 King Se-Jong Memorial Foundation, 1982), 63.

the message is clear: If we sincerely serve our parents, kings and, in the case of women, husbands, we can move the heaven and good things happen. In Confucianism, the heaven (하늘, 天) is not quite a deity. Still, it is an all encompassing existence that is all in all, often active in the lived experiences of the people, experienced anthropomorphically and subjectively as in this story, granting social positions and honor to reward their sincerity. Such movement of the heaven motivated by human sincerity is a spiritual expectation that is still found deeply engraved in Korean and Korean American Christianity, emanating through various spiritual practices, including Bible reading, to which Christians devote their commitment and energy.

This spiritual expectation is double-edged: as it is a spirituality found in a government-sanctioned publication, so the political agenda behind it is clear. Advocating for the ethical values that the government values as their political ideology, the ethical as well as the spiritual message conveyed through the *Samganghengsildo* helped strengthen the government structure and the general population's complacency to the ruling of the upper class. On the other hand, it is a powerful message for those who are politically powerless. By their ethical actions, a person can move the heaven. While the actions required in this heaven moving are arguably taxing and even dangerous, their impact emits power that the marginalized person could not summon in any normal circumstance. It is a way to transcend oneself, for the sake of others, persuading the heaven, which is experienced in those stories as transcendent.

This spiritual expectation reveals another layer, when the Confucian literature with which the upper class *Yang Ban*'s (양반) are educated is taken into consideration. The heaven, which is anthropomorphically experienced in *Samganghengsildo*, is at the

center of the Confucian cosmology. Within Confucianism, the cosmology includes the Heaven, Earth and human beings as agents forming harmony, seeing the nature of every element fluidly existing in all beings. As Thomas Barry says, "The cosmos is the macrophase of humans; humans are the microphase of the cosmos. The cosmos is encompassed in the human; the human in the cosmos."<sup>82</sup> Tu Weiming has used the term "anthropocosmic" to describe this integral relatedness between the divine and human worlds.<sup>83</sup> This may have been a revolutionary concept that Confucianism brought to the Chinese soil, where the king, called the Son of the Heaven, was believed to be the only one who had access to the heaven: Confucianism democratized this concept by claiming its universal presence and accessibility in all persons and all things. Neo-Confucianism adopted as the Joseon dynasty's governing philosophy had its central goal as figuring out the mandate of heaven (천명, 天命), through the political, social, familial, and personal cultivation to realize the anthropocosmic reality in the everyday life.

Song Inchang explores in his book, *천명과 유교적 인간학*, *Confucian Anthropology of Mandate of Heaven* (my translation), the neo-Confucian conceptualization of ways in which human beings can be awakened to the heavenly mandate.<sup>84</sup> With the Confucian assumption that the heaven's nature is also the essence of human nature, the epistemology to understand the heavenly mandate requires fine-tuning of the self. Song suggests three ways of tuning : namely 궁리 (窮理, thoughtful exploration), 진성 (盡性, uttermost sincerity), and 감통 (感通, intuitive connection or

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas Barry, "Affectivity in Classical Confucian Tradition," in *Confucian Spirituality* vol. 1. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2004), 97.

<sup>83</sup> Mary Tucker, "Introduction," in *Confucian Spirituality* vol. 1, ed. Tu Weiming and Mary Tucker (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2003), 4.

<sup>84</sup> Inchang Song, *천명과 유교적 인간학*. (Seoul: Sim-San, 2011), 123-179.

movement of heart). Thoughtful exploration is a process of understanding the cosmic principles (*Li*, 理) within things that are observed, which Zhu Xi claimed would eventually lead one to realize that the self and the thing are in its essence interconnected (物我一體). Thus, thoughtful exploration as a process to find the cosmic principle in things turns out to be a moral search for the mandate of heaven, with a goal to realize it in ordinary life. It is an intellectual search for ethical principles that can generate praxis. In other words, this is a philosophical inquiry that produces political praxis that corresponds to the heavenly mandate.

However, according to Song, this is also interconnected to uttermost sincerity (진성, 盡性). For Zhu Xi (朱熹), the founder of Neo-Confucianism, "sincerity is the principle by which things become what they are."<sup>85</sup> As such, when sincerity has its uttermost expression, it is another way to reach the *li*, a way to understand the mandate of heaven. Song states that in sincerity, we notice persistence and focused pursuit of the truthfulness that eventually allows the process of human becoming one with the heaven.<sup>86</sup> If the thoughtful exploration was the intellectual pursuit of the heavenly mandate, uttermost sincerity is the manifestation of the attitudinal commitment. This sincerity as a way to reach the heaven's mandate, is an emotional energy targeted at the relationship with heaven to acknowledge and accomplish the interconnectedness with the heaven. Probably, if the dynamic of moving the heaven found in *Samganghensildo* is to be found in the classical Confucian literature of the upper class, this uttermost sincerity comes the closest to it.

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<sup>85</sup> Zhu-Xi's commentary on chapter 25 of the *Means* (*Zhongyong*, 中庸), quoted in Song, 162.

<sup>86</sup> Song, 162-63.

The above two elements culminate in the form of intuitive connection (感通, Intuitive connection or heart connection). Song states that this is the ultimate spiritual state that is beyond the human rationalization or intelligence.<sup>87</sup> a rather intuitive and mysterious state in which consciousness functions and does not function at the same time.<sup>88</sup> When such connection is made with the heaven, dichotomous perceptions break down and self-transcendence happens. In Song's conceptualization, this is indeed a state in which the Confucian ideal of aligning oneself with the mandate of heaven happens in the most seamless fashion. Thus, the access to the heart of the heaven, the process of moving the heart is accomplished through the self-cultivation by which one's self is attuned to be one with the heaven.

These three ways to access the mandate of the heaven show the Confucian ideal of self-cultivation. On the surface level, this self-cultivation process resembles the grandiosity experience in the Bible reading that my interviewees showed. However, self-cultivation is not an individuation process in Confucianism. Mary Tucker quotes Tu Weiming who says self-cultivation is a process of "self-transformation as a communal act."<sup>89</sup> Once the heavenly mandate is understood through such self-cultivation, it becomes the basis for the moral mandate of "regulating the family, governing the state, and establishing world peace (*Great Learning, Ch. 1*),"<sup>90</sup> a required contribution of a person who acts upon the heavenly mandate. The effort to communicate with the heaven, in this way, is brought back to the reality of the ordinary life. Therefore, the self-transcending

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<sup>87</sup> Song, 170.

<sup>88</sup> Song, 171.

<sup>89</sup> Mary Tucker, "Introduction," in *Confucian Spirituality*, vol 1, eds. Tu Weiming and Mary Tucker (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2003), 21.

<sup>90</sup> Tu Weiming, "Learning to Be Human: Spiritual Exercises from Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming to Liu Zongzhu," in *Confucian Spirituality*, vol. 2. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2004), 149.

effort of the Confucian person flows into the immanent reality. Mary Tucker observes that "the seamless web of immanence and transcendence in this tradition thus creates a unique form of spiritual praxis among the world's religions."<sup>91</sup> However, if we put what we just examined in comparison to *Samganghengsildo*, do we get such a seamless picture?

What most of the Confucianism scholars have neglected in their discussion of its spirituality are the power differentials that manifest in the lived experience in which the ideal is implemented. Consider this: when we put together the three elements that leads to the understanding of heavenly mandate, we get a picture of an upper class Confucian male scholar, who is studying the Confucian literature, trying to tune his sincere search to the heavenly mandate, which results in a cultivated self that understands such a mandate by introspection and intuitive communication with the heaven. Here, thus, the heaven is accessed by self-cultivation, and heaven is moved by his attunement. This contrasts quite obviously with the way heaven is moved in *Samganghengsildo*, where only the extreme self-sacrificing actions would move the heaven: it costs the self to move the heaven. As *Samganghengsildo* is published with lower class as the target audience, such a different mode of heaven-moving implicates how the Confucian scholars that mass published it envisioned the lower class's spirituality: inspired by the heaven-moving that the characters in the biography accomplish, the lower class individuals will live by the ethical principles advocated in this book by sacrificing themselves.

As a matter of fact, such a political agenda had certain success in persuading the general public to follow the examples illustrated in *Samganghengsildo*. Further, among

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<sup>91</sup> Tucker, 2.



the three ethical codes advocated in *Samganghengsildo*, the third ethical code of virtuous women concerned a group marginalized across class borders. Examination of several layers of the impact of *Samganghengsildo* and political propaganda surrounding its publication, reveals some insights regarding the spirituality found in it.

*Samganghengsildo*'s impact is best demonstrated by the fact that the paradigm of becoming a virtuous woman or a woman with chastity (열녀, *yeolnyeo*) illustrated in *Samganghengsildo* was internalized and performed by numerous women in the late Joseon dynasty (17-19 C). According to the chapter on women's chastity in *Samganghengsildo*, a woman can prove herself to be a virtuous wife mostly through self-sacrifice. Myung Hwan Kang observes in his article, "<삼강행실도> - 약자에게 가해진 도덕의 폭력," that 80 women out of 110 appearing in this chapter were assessed to be *yeolnyeos* through their deaths.<sup>92</sup> He also points out that the thirty women who did not choose to die were from royalty or upper class, most of them queens.<sup>93</sup> The ways in which the women decide to die can be divided into three categories, according to Kang.<sup>94</sup> First, women offered themselves for execution in the place of their husbands, when their husbands were sentenced to death. Second, women decided to "follow" their husbands by killing themselves when their husbands died. Third, women killed themselves to protect their chastity or sexual purity, which appeared in basically two forms: either women chose to commit suicide when sexually harassed or they chose suicide when they were forced to remarry<sup>3</sup> after they were widowed. With the distribution of *Samganghengsildo*,

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<sup>92</sup> Myung Hwan Kang, "<삼강행실도> - 약자에게 가해진 도덕의 폭력(A Study on Samkanghaengsildo: Ethics Violence Imposed on the Marginalized)," *한국고전연구* 5, no. 21 (2002), 16.

<sup>93</sup> Kang, 16.

<sup>94</sup> Kang, 17.

many more biographies of *yeolnyeo* (*Yeolnyeojeon*, 열녀전) were written and quickly established themselves as an important genre of literature, providing the opportunity to glimpse the lives of the women of the late *Joseon* dynasty. In 1485, a law against remarriage of widows was decreed, reinforcing the observance of the ethical code of women's chastity by legally depriving the sons of remarried widows of chances to take the official exam through which government officers were chosen. This law, coupled with incentives for women to follow the ethics of *yeolnyeo*, such as building monuments commemorating the deaths of women proven to be *yeolnyeos* and granting life-long tax exemption to their families, produced numerous women committing suicide to become *yeolnyeos*. It is even said that almost all widows in the *Joseon* dynasty committed suicide to become *yeolnyeos*, which generated criticism by social thinkers like Dasan Jeong Yagyong (다산 정약용) who insisted suicide following the natural death of one's husband was irresponsible and irrational behavior.<sup>95</sup>

Korean feminist thinkers have engaged this phenomenon in various ways. Among them, Insook Hong pays attention to the problem of social class by analyzing the biographies of virtuous women composed in the late *Joseon* dynasty.<sup>96</sup> Hong observes several conspicuous elements: first, geographically, virtuous women were mainly located in provinces distant from the capital Seoul, where power and wealth was concentrated and more liberal ideas and more fluid cultural elements were present. Women in Seoul and the surrounding provinces did not seem to feel pressured to commit suicide to meet

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<sup>95</sup> Kang, 27.

<sup>96</sup> Insook Hong, "열녀 담론의 새로운 독해: 성과 계층의 문제를 중심으로 (A New Way of Reading an Exemplary Woman (烈女) Discourse: Centering on Sexuality and Class)," 한국고전번역원연구 5, (2002), 85-118.

the expectation of being virtuous, while the male authors of the biographies from the conservative Southern or Northern provinces constantly felt inspired by the death of *yeolnyeos* and reinforced their expectations upon women through their prolific writings on the subject of *yeolnyeo*.<sup>97</sup> In this literature, Hong senses the frustration of these ruling class males, who were distant from the central power and were desperate to claim any kind of power to exalt their *yangban* class (ruling class) status. The death of a *yeolnyeo* exalted her husband, a fellow *yangban* who was frustrated power-wise just like the author of the biography himself, in such an honorable way that those men who observed such acts must have felt deep satisfaction that was hard to be found in their own locations. In this period, many descendants of the ruling class of *yangban* experienced financial collapse, which compelled them to make every effort to maintain their social status and save face in the highly honor-centered society. For these struggling descendants of the *yangban* class, the government-initiated incentives to honor the virtuous women with honorary monuments and tax-exemption were exactly the solutions to such problems. A woman who killed herself for her husband was able to, first, save face for the family by proving herself and her family to be virtuous *yangban*, as she demonstrated strong commitment to *yangban* class' neo-Confucian values; thus she was able to restore the community's acknowledgement of her family's social status. Second, if she was acknowledged by the government, she contributed to the family's finances in no small way: the tax exemption was significant enough to rebuild the family finances.<sup>98</sup> On a relational level, the honor her sacrifice brought would have great impact on her children, especially her sons, as such honor provided status that distinguished them as sons of a

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<sup>97</sup> Hong, 93.

<sup>98</sup> Hong, 90.

*yeolnyeo*. When a woman considered the intensive labor and constant relational conflicts with the in-laws that she had to endure under the tremendous financial pressure that her husband's death added onto the family, the sense of appreciation that she could gain by becoming a *yeolnyeo* was worth the price of death; with the law ruling out any other options for her, surviving her husband's death was simply hopeless suffering. As Hong points out, these women faced a dead-end.<sup>99</sup> But through this death, this powerless *yeolnyeo* accomplishes a significant movement that can be interpreted as the moving of the heart of heaven, as her action impacts her family by bestowing upon it honor and financial stability, the heavenly good promised in *Samganghensildo*.

This ethical code of virtuous women became associated with the spirituality of moving the heart of heaven and surrounding people, which I found incorporated into personal spirituality in one of my Korean American pastoral counseling clients.<sup>100</sup> The code of virtuous women is still very much alive in evangelical Korean Christian communities, where the virginity of young single women is advocated, and those who have lost it are judged as impure and thus unworthy persons. Behind such a moral code lies this thick historical context that forms part of the spiritual world of a Korean American Christian person, as men impose such a code on women and women are made to feel inadequate spiritually, no longer a good woman of God, because she violated the code. Such a sense of spiritual inadequacy can be traced back to the history of *yeolnyeos*, who by observing the ethical code of virtuous women were believed to have moved the heaven, financially and socially benefiting her family. This contrasts to the self-

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<sup>99</sup> Hong, 96.

<sup>100</sup> Hee-Kyu Park, "The Silver Dagger: The Cultural Hybridity and Premarital Sexuality in Evangelical Korean American Women," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 22, no. 1 (Summer 2012), <http://www.spt-jpt.org/index.php/jpth/article/view/23/pdf> (accessed August 16, 2013).

cultivation reserved for the upper class men, which fosters self-growth that supports their political power.

Tracing these different lines of Confucian spirituality of moving the heart, I come back to the struggle that I had as I tried to sort out through the debate in psychology on the subject of separate self and self in relationships. Here in the history of Confucian spirituality development, I find that the self and relationships overlap in complex ways. Through my interviewee's narratives, I found the impactful transformation in the immanent spirituality that had imparted the capacity to relate with others and the subjectivity of the Bible, while I found the self-focused transformation to be a necessary yet less relational process. The spirituality of *Samganhengsildo* has the relational commitment that leads to ethically committed action full of sincerity: this resembles the immanent spirituality in its relationality. However, unlike my interviewees' experiences in which empathy created zest and clearer self-understanding, the movement of the heart in *Samganhengsildo* happens at the expense of the self-cohesiveness of the characters in the narratives. They lose their health, limbs, child, or even life, to make this spiritual event happen for the sake of relationships. At the same time, the self-cultivation of the upper class man does seem to resemble the self formation process that required grandiosity mirrored through the subjectivity of the Bible. The process of self-cultivation has potential to become life-giving spirituality, like the grandiosity experience of my interviewees, but it needs to be expanded in its relational scope to include the marginalized. In spite of its impact on Korean Christian spirituality, *Samganhengsildo*'s way of heaven-moving spirituality is suspiciously oppressive, blocking the self-flourishing found in the immanent spirituality of my interviewees. Perhaps another layer

of the second veil of Maya in Csikszentmihalyi's language needs to be lifted up to reveal the T-persons among the lower class Confucian people. Therefore, I need to turn to something that reflects the subaltern voice, namely the voice of the silenced colonized subject that the political voice of the *Samganghengsildo* was powering over. How did the lower class experience Confucian spiritual transformation? How is the subaltern spiritual consciousness expressed? Would that resemble the spirituality I found in the narratives of my interviewees?

### **Toward a Subaltern Confucian Spirituality**

I turn to biblical scholar Vincent Wimbush's introduction to *MisReading America: Scriptures and Difference*, which collects the voices of Bible reading from marginalized communities through qualitative research. To construct what he calls some "general perspectives on the issues and problems"<sup>101</sup> that cross over the boundaries between these marginalized communities, Wimbush introduces a famous passage from Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*:

The home plantation of Colonel Lloyd wore the appearance of a country village....It was called by the slaves the *Great House Farm*....The slaves selected to go to the Great House Farm, for the monthly allowance for themselves and their fellow-slaves, were peculiarly enthusiastic. While on their way, they would make the dense woods, for miles around, reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. The thought that came up, came out – if not in the word, in the sound; and – as frequently in the one as in the other. They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone. Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House

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<sup>101</sup> Vincent Wimbush, "Introduction: Knowing Ex-centrics/Ex-centric Knowing," in *MisReading America: Scriptures and Difference*, ed. Vincent Wimbush with the assistance of Lalruatkima and Melissa Reid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8.

Farm. Especially would they do this, when leaving home. They would then sing most exultingly...

"I am going away to the Great House Farm!

O, yea! Oh, yea! O!"

This they would sing, as a chorus, to words which to many would seem unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to themselves....I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circles; so that I neither saw nor hear as those without might see and hear. They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness. I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them. The mere recurrence [of] those songs, even now, afflicts me; and while I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek. To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery.<sup>102</sup>

Wimbush identifies many issues in Douglass' narrative, including, "subjectivity and consciousness, collective and individual; discourse and power; power and knowledge; knowledge and positionality, or situatedness within a circle; knowledge and the center; knowledge and centers."<sup>103</sup> The subaltern subjectivity that is excluded from the power discourse of slaveholding America resonates deeply through this narrative, first expressed through the songs, the creative expression of what I as a Korean would call *Han*. This powerful story gives me a pointer in my search for a subaltern consciousness, suppressed in the Confucian literature produced by the upper class Confucian elite in their attempt to create submissive consciousness that trickled even into the twenty first century consciousness.

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<sup>102</sup> Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself (1845)," in *The Oxford Frederick Douglass Reader*, ed. William Andrews (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 37-38.

<sup>103</sup> Wimbush, "Introduction: Knowing Ex-centrics/Ex-centric Knowing," 9.

By the grace of God, such subaltern consciousness of the Neo-Confucian *Joseon* dynasty is preserved in the creative oral tradition of *Pansori* (판소리), a form of one person narrative-singing that developed contemporaneously in the marketplace life of the common people, while the late *Joseon* dynasty's *yangban* class was going through the instability that resulted in the numerous women attempting to become *yeolnyeos* by committing suicide. *Pansori* in its entirety<sup>104</sup> is an epic form of folklore, composed of detailed scenes that are both narrated and sung by professional singers (소리꾼, *Soriggun*). The basic story line would be familiar to most of Korean persons of the time. Thus, in actual performance, the singer will announce the piece's location within the overall story plot. *Pansori* is an oral tradition that has been handed down through the apprentice system. Like most oral traditions, it has room for creative improvising as well as places for commentaries. The performance in the format of the traditional dyad of the drummer and the standing singer can happen anywhere, be it in market places, in private homes, or at parties.

*Pansori* developed possibly during mid *Joseon* Dynasty as a form of folk music performed as part of the itinerant circus-type entertainment. *Pan* (판) is a word that denotes a situational space in which playful actions happen. In other words, *Pan* is a transitional space where play (놀이) happens: where a shamanistic ritual happens, a *Gutpan* (굿판, ritual-*pan*) is formed, where wrestling happens, *Ssireumpa* (씨름판, wrestling-*pan*), where games happens *Noreumpan* (놀음판, play-*pan*) respectively. In case of *Pansori*, it is music (소리, *Sori*) that happens in a 소리판 (*Soripan*). *Soripan* can

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<sup>104</sup> It takes about 6 and a half hours to sing *Chun Hyang Ga*, one of the five oral traditions of *Pansori*.



be formed anywhere, as *Pansori* is not an art form that depends on the landscape of the theatre but a soundscape, touching the imagination through the narrative and sound, transforming the space of *Pan* into a transitional and liminal space, between the reality and the creative and transformative space. The audience gathered around these musicians, becomes performers as well, as they talk into the story with their *Chuimse* (추임새), which is simultaneously a commentary and a rhythmic beat that create a joint performance of the performer and the audience.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the improvising that happens in the delivery of the oral tradition not only grows through the creativity of the performers but also gains different layers of meaning through the participation of the audience. Such creativity and connection that happens in this liminal space provides good soil for expression of spirituality, human resilience, and growth.

First developed during the mid *Joseon* dynasty but only recorded in print during the reign of *Yeongjo* (英祖, 1724-1776), *Pansori* flourished during the late *Joseon* Dynasty, exactly the time in which composition of *yeolnyeo* biographies by the southern *yangban* men reached its climax. Geographically, the development of *Pansori* also overlaps with locations of development of *yeolnyeo* biographies, providing us a good test case to look into the different expressions of mentality of the same period. The most popular *Pansori* that had seen burgeoning development in its artistic expression is *Chunhyangga* (춘향가), the plot of which develops around the ethical norm of *yeolnyeo* just as the *yeolnyeo* biographies. However, unlike those that reflect the sentiment and aspiration of the *yangban* class, *Chunhyangga* contains the consciousness of the common folks, crystalized in the artful form of *Pansori*, sung by itinerant musicians, who in their

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<sup>105</sup> *Chuimse* resembles the oral participation of the audience that utters “amen” during the sermon, which can be observed in some Christian traditions.

particular form of lifestyle occupied a liminal space within the society. From Heinz Kohut's perspective, these musicians functioned as cultural selfobjects of the late *Joseon* dynasty.

Unlike the songs of the slaves that projected the subaltern consciousness of the slaves in its pure form, by which I mean expressing their emotional subjectivity without mixing it with that of the slaveholder, *Pansori* as it is handed down to this day is a hybrid cultural selfobject of the *Joseon* dynasty projected by both the common folks and the upper class *yangbans*. In spite of its origin as folk music, *Pansori* began to attract the attention of the *yangban* class during the 18<sup>th</sup> century: it began to be recorded in prints and eventually produced singers from the *yangban* class as well. Thus, the current form of *Chunhyangga* contains some trace of the upper class taste in its parodic elements, drawing from Confucian literature and classical Chinese literature as well as from life experience of the common people.<sup>106</sup> However, the emotional reality and spirituality reflected in the *Chunhyangga* is very different from that of *Samganghongsildo*, reflecting the subaltern consciousness in a powerful way.

As a way of examining the Confucian spirituality from the perspective of subaltern consciousness, I describe the narratives surrounding the themes of heart movement in *Chunhyangga*, reflecting on the relational dynamics to compare it with the relational dynamics found in *Samganghongsildo* and Neo-Confucian ways to reach the understanding of the heavenly mandate. To do this, let me first introduce the overall plot of *Chunhyangga*.

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<sup>106</sup> To construct this analysis of *Pansori*, I referred to the following website: <http://pansorimuseum.com/07pansori/pansori01.asp> (accessed on November 19, 2013)

*Mongyong*, who was the son of the magistrate of *Namwon*, a small city in the southwestern province, courted *Chunhyang*, a beautiful daughter of *Wolmae*. *Wolmae* was a retired *Gisaeng* (가성) drafted into local government to serve as a female entertainer belonging to the lowest class in the *Joseon* society. *Chunhyang* was born between *Wolmae* and the former magistrate whom *Wolmae* used to serve as *Gisaeng* while he governed *Namwon*. With *Wolmae*'s permission, *Mongyong* and *Chunhyang* secretly married in *Wolmae*'s house. But not too long after, *Mongyong*'s father relocated to Seoul, which forced him leave *Chunhyang* behind with a promise to come back to get her later when he was established. While he was gone, the newly appointed magistrate of *Namwon*, *Byeonhakdo*, having heard of *Chunhyang*'s beauty, summoned *Chunhyang* to serve him as his concubine, but *Chunhyang* refuses this request on account of her marital status and her faithfulness toward *Mongyong*. Her virtuous insistence enraged the new greedy magistrate who did not see the value of a lower class woman keeping chastity for her husband who seemingly abandoned her. Thus he severely punished *Chunhyang*, sentencing her to beating, chaining and imprisonment, while constantly persuading her to change her mind. In the meanwhile, *Mongyong* had studied hard in Seoul and successfully passed the official exam to become a government officer, getting promoted quickly. Hearing about the injustice in southwestern provinces, the king assigned him as a secret government agent with power to punish the unjust local government officers. When he arrived in *Namwon* disguised as a beggar, he learned that *Chunhyang* was about to be beheaded the next day during the new magistrate's birthday party. *Mongyong* appears the next day at the birthday party, interacted with the magistrate and his guests under disguise, then carried out king's mandated function of secret government agent, correcting the unjust government administration by punishing the magistrate, restructuring the local government and finally rescuing *Chunhyang* from her ordeal. *Chunhyang*, who was finally reunited with *Mongyong*, was accepted by *Mongyong*'s family as his legitimate first wife, as everyone recognized her as a *yeolnyeo*. *Mongyong* and *Chunhyang* lived happily ever after.<sup>107</sup>

As this is closely based on the lives of the historical persons who inspired the *yangban* men to compose the biographies, when this plot is found in historical account we can notice that this story has a positive and creative ending that the reality of virtuous women may not have experienced in their actual lives. For example, in the account of *Kyeongchun*, whose story is recorded on a memorial stone in *Yeongwol*, a town in mountainous northern province, *Kyeongchun* ended up in Han-ridden death, in spite of

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<sup>107</sup> Summarized from the lyric of *Chunhyangga*, performed by Ahn Sook Sun, Samsung Music, SCO-126AHN (CD), 1996.

the striking similarity with *Chunhyang*'s situation. The memorial stone, called

*Kyeongchunbi*(瓊春碑) accounts:

越妓瓊春殉節之處 (The site of martyrdom of *Kyeongchun*, *Gisaeng* of *Yeongwol*)

越妓瓊春 故李侍郎莅越時 所聘以其初許身也 故欲自潔以守 及後官之來 衙內人有強之者 數被箠楚 殆不能堪 一日盛服而入 言笑自如 日倘無數日呼喚 當調病軀 一聽所欲 翌朝遂往訣其父墳 歸爲諸弟梳 仍起往錦障江邊 坐於絕石 岸歌數闋 泣下沾裳 悲恨不自勝時 稚弟在傍 乃詒而使之去 卽奮身投水死 歲壬辰十月 其年十六 家人奔往 拯之衣衿 有隱映物 裂縫視之 乃李侍郎筆 嗚呼其死也 視古之從容就義者何如哉 今都巡察使巽菴李公 以人冢宰出按關東節行部 過越州聞而奇之 曰 以賤籍而乃能辨此 此真烈女也 烏可無樹風聲之道乎 遂捐俸屬越守俾立一片石識其處 又屬余記其顛末 余惟瓊春之死 距今爲二十四年 始得表顯之 微我公瓊春之節 其將湮沒而已也 乙卯八月平昌郡守南義老記 寧越府使韓鼎運書<sup>108</sup>

When *Kyeongchun* met *Suhak* who was a *Sirang*,<sup>109</sup> she had allowed herself to him. She has kept herself pure and faithful to him. [when he had to leave her to follow his father to Seoul]. When finally the next magistrate arrived, he summoned her to serve him as his concubine, but she refused to do so to keep herself virtuous and faithful to *Suhak*. The enraged magistrate repeatedly punished her with beating, which became unbearable. One day she appeared in front of him beautifully dressed with smiles on her face to tell him that she will follow his will if he would allow her to take some rest for several days to recover from the injuries from the punishments. The next morning, she went to her father's burial ground with her sister to greet him. There she comforted her sister and combed her hair. Then she went to the steep cliff over the river, sat on the rock singing lamenting songs. Her tears wet her long skirt and her sadness and Han could not be overcome. Her young sister kept company. She sent her sister back with good words, then threw herself into the water and drowned. This was during the October of the year of *Imjin* (1772). She was sixteen years old, married without the ceremony. When her body was found, those who found her discovered something sewed into her garments. Alas, it was the *Suhak*'s writing promising his return. How come it is this hard to follow the way of the righteous! Now as *Sonam Yi*, the royal inspector of administration to *Gangwon* Province, heard of this surprising story while inspecting the *Yongwol* area, he said, "she is indeed a virtuous woman to do this in spite of her lowly birth class. How can we not let the trees and wind carry this story wide!" He, thus, let the magistrate of

<sup>108</sup> Copied by Min Nam in his article in the internet newspaper, *Herald Kyeongje*, accessed on October 31, 2013 at <http://biz.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20130423000025>.

<sup>109</sup> A lowly ranking government position in *Joseon* dynasty.

*Yeongwol* mark the place with a memorial stone paying for the expense himself. He did this so that the beginning and end of the story will let people think of *Kyeongchun*'s death. This was after 24 years have passed since her death. Through this memorial stone, *Kyeongchun*'s faithfulness will be known to many. This was done during the August of *Eulmyo* year(1795). *Nam Heuiro*, magistrate of *Pyeongchang* province composed the narrative and *Han Seongun*, magistrate of *Yeongwol* was the calligrapher.<sup>110</sup>

*Chunhyang*'s reunification with her husband *Mongyong* is likely to be a projection of the Han-ridden subaltern consciousness of those who see and hear of the heart-aching pain within the social structure where the whims of the ruling class destroy the Confucian-aspiring interconnectedness of the moral values, emotional connections, and social status, resulting in *Kyeongchun*'s death. The projection that has the transformative ending in which love and virtues are rewarded in the form of *Chunhyang*'s being recognized as the virtuous woman and her upward movement in class is in essence a manifestation of the heart moving that echoes the theme of *Samganhengsildo*. However, when we look into the relationships that are formed and performed through the *Pansori* of *Chunhyangga*, there is another layer of subaltern consciousness that demonstrates the spirituality of the movement of heart, namely that of playful achievement of mutuality.

Within *Chunhyangga*, the social structure and the power imbalance is challenged through the relational dynamics among the characters. The authority of the upper class, which is concentrated in the person of *Mongyong*, is accessible through playful word plays and his servant *Bangja*'s mischievous teasing. When *Mongyong*'s encounter with *Chunhyang* renders him enchanted by *Chunhyang*'s beauty, his absent-mindedness distracts his reading of Confucian classical literature that he was supposed to be dutifully reading aloud. As he reads, all the sentences connect to his fantasies about *Chunhyang* in

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<sup>110</sup> My translation of the above memorial stone epitaph.

the most comical ways, and *Bangja*, who is listening to his reading of the text, recognizes the distraction and teases him by sarcastically pointing out *Mongyong*'s love-struck dreaminess. The audience would recognize the twisting of the solemn classical literature of the Confucian elites into love songs, while the dignity of the *yangban* scholar is made fun of by the lowest class servant: a feast of comedies in which *Mongyong* is becoming a love-stricken idiot. However, *Mongyong* does not resent that. He allows *Bangja* to have his fun, responding to him in his own playful way, exulting his scholarly capacity by entering into another text only to end up in another twist colored by his fantasies. In those playful interactions between *Mongyong* and *Bangja*, the strict power differential between *yangban* and *cheonmin* (the lowest slave-like class) along with the textual dignity of the classical Confucian literature marking the authority of the *yangban* class is upset, bringing down *Mongyong* into mutual relationship with *Bangja*.

In terms of such power differential, *Chunhyang* occupies an interesting space: she is a liminal person. As a daughter of the former magistrate, she has maintained an education level of an upper class woman, which was possible because her mother was a *gisaeng*, drafted as the official *gisaeng* of the local government. These *gisaengs*, called *gwangi* (관기), were educated in literature, calligraphy, art, music, and dancing, as they functioned as the entertainers for official occasions, in which they interacted face to face with the *yangban* class males. *Wolmae*, as a retired *gwangi*, thus had the education that enabled her to raise *Chunhyang* in the literature and arts, which otherwise would be available only to the girls of *yangban* family. *Chunhyang* herself and *Bangja* regard her as *yangban* by virtue of birth and education, while the tyrant *Byeonhakdo* regards her as *gisaeng*, according to her mother's class. With the intelligence and elegance that she

brought to the relationship, her command of writing and knowledge becomes an important element that makes her relationship with *Mongyong* mutual. She is articulate about her desires and needs: she can say “no” when she finds things unacceptable, which capacity crystalized in her resistance to *Byeonhakdo*. Thus, the letter that she writes from prison, which *Bangja* carries to Seoul to deliver to *Mongyong*, is intelligently articulated and yet emotionally persuasive to *Mongyong*; it is marked by poignantly correct ethical reasoning, as well as by deeply touching sentiment.<sup>111</sup> Her ability to articulate her sentiment in the skilled rhetoric of the *yangban* class enables her to resist the unjust tyranny of *Byeonhakdo*, the corrupted magistrate that required her to serve him as concubine. For example: she was sentenced to the beating of her bottom. In this punishment, the criminal is tied down onto a wooden plaque with her bottom exposed in air. The beating is done with a wooden bat: *Chunhyangga* depicts the scene of the punishment, in which the person who beats her counting the number of the strikes, and *Chunhyang* shouting out a phrase that uses the number as the poetic yet resistant argument. For example, at number one (일), she shouts out: “As I have made up my mind

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<sup>111</sup>For Korean readers, I include the letter here. 춘향편지, 낭송조 (*Chunhyang's Letter sung in Nangsongjo*): 일함정누홍루습(一函情漏紅淚濕)이요 만지춘수묵미간(滿紙春愁墨未幹)을 한 봉한 전에 눈물이 붉어 있고 가득한 근심 맑은 먹이 마르지 않는지라. 비두에 문연하고 열번 남아 죽은 바에 다만 일개 혼뿐이웁기로 겨우 정신을 수습하여 두어줄 글을 올리오니 깊이 하감(下鑑)하옵소서. 작춘(作春)이후로 수택(手澤)을 뵈옵지 못하오니 멀리 바라는 마음 갈수록 새로우며 글자 깨실때는 술 마시고 글 지을 제 빛소리난 운이 되고 달빛은 글귀되어 백향산의 값을 기다리웁디니, 한 번 올라 가신 후의 일에 맞아 들는 비는 집의 근심을 따라 올고, 가지 들어 밋는 달은 글자의 얼굴이 오신 듯 허옇고, 도리어 상심하여 거문고로 울음을 대하오니 육현이 끊어지고 글귀로 회포를 맡아 구회(久懷)가 마르나이다. 유수같은 광음(光陰)이 석화같이 바빠오니 아까운 정줄은 만일이 저물어 동군(東君)이 애지하사 허하지 아니하며 뜻밖의 변이 있어 우터운 복숨이 조석을 다투오니, 화월의 마른 고지 물을 누가 대어주며 고운 꽃이 흐려진들 뒤라시 애끼리까? 어찌어찌 오실테면 다시보지 못할 사람, 천금일찰(千金一察)로 위로하여 주시옵을 전만복망 마래내다.

신관사또 도입후에 수정 들라하옵기로 저사모피하옵다가 참혹한 악행을 당하여 모진 복숨이 끊지름 아니 하였으나 장하지흔이 비구에 뿔터이오니 바라건대 서방님은 기러 만종록 누리시나 전주만세후 후보에나 다시 만나 이별없이 살것내다. 백운홍수(白雲洪水)깊은 곳에 인거인내(引去引來)주전할 제 귀중하신 도련님과 부절없이 눈이 맞아 이지경이 웬일이요.

to have single (one) mindedness, would it change even for one second or one hour (일편단심 먹은 마음 일시일각의 변하리까)?” As she articulates her resolution in such clever form in the midst of the most painful experience, the audience of *C’hunhyangga* is invited into a deep empathy toward *C’hunhyang*, while experiencing the rapture of her intellectual and ethical victory over *Byeonhakdo* as they see her outwitting him. Therefore, the sincerity required to move the hearts, as seen in Confucian classical literature, gains another interpretation in the liminal experience of *C’hunhyang* in this story: this sincerity has the context of the powerless person within society claiming an ethical power against the injustice they face. This sincerity is coming from an agent who has strong enough consciousness to persist in what she believes. The movement of the heart of the audience happens through their participation in this consciousness as they empathize and work through the difficult moments of the *pansori* and their own lives through their emotional involvement.

The movement of heaven gains a new theological<sup>112</sup> interpretation through *Mongyong*’s mouth. When he arrived at *C’hunhyang*’s house in disguise as a beggar, *Wolmae* was praying to the heaven. She has been praying with her utmost sincerity every early morning with the water scooped firstly from her well. This water is regarded sacred as the pure form of universal energy is believed to be concentrated in such water. She prays that the heaven would empathize with *C’hunhyang* as it is the heaven that recognizes filial piety, loyalty to king and women’s virtue, reflecting the language of *Samganhengsildo*. She invokes heaven’s movement to help *Mongyong* to gain a position in the government that allows him to come down to *Namwon* as the government

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<sup>112</sup> With the deity like quality of the heaven experienced by those who engage it, I opt for the word theological to denote *Monyong*’s thought process.



inspector, which happens to be exactly what *Mongyong* was doing at the moment, and save *Chunhyang* from her ordeal. This invocation is quickly mixed with her *Han* that she traces back to her lowly birth, without which *Chunhyang* would have been safely married without the secrecy, which would have prevented the current suffering. Her *Han*-ridden petition exhausts her, resulting in her collapse on the ground, but again she quickly would collect herself to continue to pray. Observing that from outside the fence, *Mongyong* says, “I thought I became successful thanks to the grace of ancestors, but now I know it is due to my mother-in-law’s sincere prayers.” This sincerity is thus not simply an exemplary demonstration of ethical commitment but also is thickly colored with the suffering and *Han*<sup>113</sup> that the social power structure and the unjust powerful are causing, and the clear articulation of the subaltern consciousness and relationality, instead of the downward grace coming from the higher power of the ancestors’ spirit.

The transformative finale in *Chunhyangga* is a communal moment that touches every aspect of life affected by injustice. *Mongyong* appears in the birthday party as a seemingly powerless *Yangban* claiming his own space within the party in spite of the contempt of the other *Yangbans* present there. In an attempt to chase him away, *Byeonhakdo* suggests that everyone compose a poem with two letters he suggests. Out of those two letters, *Mongyong* volunteers to compose a poignantly accusatory poem that reproaches the greed and power abuse that made the *Namwon* community suffer. Then he leaves for his next task. While those who read the poem realize its ominousness and try to find their way out of the party, the previously organized inspecting party composed of people *Mongyong* has recruited with king’s mandate enters the building and captures

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<sup>113</sup> *Han* is an intense emotional state that generates from suffering.

everyone for judgment. In this process, *C'hunhyang* is brought to *Mongyong* and they reunite.

The reunification happens in an interesting scene where *Mongyong* is in the seat of the judge as the king's secret agent, sorting through the imprisoned during *Byeonhakdo*'s reign. He calls out *C'hunhyang*'s alleged crime as "humiliating the magistrate by refusing to serve him as his concubine." As *C'hunhyang* is unaware that the judging agent is in fact her husband, when *Mongyong* says, "though you refused to serve the former magistrate, surely you wouldn't refuse to serve me, a much higher officer than he, would you?" Hearing it, she accuses him to be just as corrupted as the former magistrate and resists his request, asking him instead to kill her. In this interaction, which the all-knowing audience observes as the outside empathizers, *C'hunhyang* articulates her clear expectation of what an uncorrupted Confucian officer is supposed to be like. By accusing *Mongyong* of his wrong ethical standard, the subaltern consciousness is resisting the injustice and articulated. The tension of the scene resolves when *Mongyong* hands her the ring she gave him: finally she recognizes him. *C'hunhyang* passes out for a short time from the dissolution of the deadly tension, but when she regains her consciousness, she is no longer just an ethical person defined by her virtue but a self-asserting person in relationship. She finally voices her deeply-seated grievance, yet it is mixed with the joy of having her dream come true, which she compares to the spring breeze after a severe winter: how could he have forgotten her for so long? How could he not tell her about his identity the night before, which could have saved her from the deadly tension she lived through on the day of her threatened execution? Here *C'hunhyang* has the agency to articulate how the broken connection is coming back to equilibrium, to the former

mutuality that was possible in their secret marriage in her mother's house. Now this relationship is openly public and the mutuality of their relationship in which lowly *Chunhyang* has the agency to voice out her feelings becomes public as well. As this is happening in the context where all the public concerns of economic injustice and corruption are addressed, her renewed relationship with *Mongyong* squarely becomes part of the social transformation over which everyone rejoices together.

The *Chunhyangga* ends with *Wolmae*'s dance. Having to figure out a way to come out in public as *Mongyong*'s mother-in-law after having been particularly mean to him over the night because she judged him to be a powerless beggar, when she comes out, she comes out big. As soon as she hears her daughter asking for her mother, *Wolmae* comes out dancing and singing aloud into the center of this new revolutionary *Pan* (판). In her song, *Chunhyang*'s ethical virtue of faithfulness is now due to *Wolmae*, as she is the one who gave birth to her. Interpreting her song through the lens of self-cultivation in classical Confucian literature or even through the self-sacrificial dedication in *Samganhengsildo*, the mandate of heaven or the movement of heaven manifests through her female body as *Chunhyang* is her bodily fruit granted by the heaven. A playful grandiosity is expressed through the creative energy of the song in which she brings forth her spiritual transformation as the one embodying the heavenly mandate in the most inviting song and dance. In her playful invitation, "where on earth should I use my hips? Should I buy a rice field with it or should I buy a barley field? Let me shake them to my heart's content!" The audience is invited to celebrate the transformation together with her by her witty gesture. As self-focused as her language is, it is a very different form of testimony from those I observed in my interviews: it is a communal testimony phrased in

first person language that the community empathically experiences together through her ordeal, thus it is a testimony that belongs to everyone.

Thus the subaltern experience of the spirituality of the movement of heaven is expansive in scope and relational in character. Communal empathy is part of the process of dealing with the *Han* that individuals experience in their dealing with the unjust power over them. Thus the empathy that accumulates in the spirituality of the individual is expansively experienced in the community. Further, it strives for relational mutuality, as the desire for such relationality is projected into the relationships between people who would have been separated quite afar through class differences. They feel deeply together, laugh together, and engage in playful conversation that engages each other's consciousness, resulting in energy, zest, clarity, and more connection. Thus, the spirituality of moving the heaven eventually becomes a communal spiritual projection that extends the web of connection that cannot help but touch the heaven.

In the next chapter, I will bring this subaltern Confucian spirituality, as well as the psychological insights gained through conversation with self psychology, relational cultural theory, and positive psychology into the normative task of constructing a pastoral theology of biblical engagement.



## CHAPTER 5.

### THE NORMATIVE TASK:

#### CONSTRUCTING A POSTCOLONIAL PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF BIBLICAL ENGAGEMENT

##### The Puzzle of the Lamp to My Feet and Light to My Path

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105 (NRSV)  
“주님께서 인도하시는 길, 내 발에 등이라고 했으니까, 그냥 그 비취는 등이 뭐  
전체를 비취겠어요? 내 앞 길만 비취잖아요. 그러니까 그 앞 길만, 열린 길만 가는  
거예요. (When the Lord leads [through the Bible] the lamp shines on my feet...So I see  
that much, I walk on that path, as much as I can see.)”

This is what Mina said as she reflected on the guidance she gets from the Bible in regard to her blind son's future. In spite of her life-long Bible reading and studying, her life situation still presents continuously unknown paths that feel like darkness. In such darkness, what she finds in the Bible is the lamp on her feet, guidance for each step, without knowing where the path leads her. Yet, she trusts this seemingly fragmented guidance, because she has found that all those small pieces ultimately come together as a jigsaw puzzle, revealing the whole picture little by little. The fragmented guidance eventually falls into its own places within the big picture of the puzzle: the movement of the heart happens each time when a piece of such puzzle comes together with another part of the puzzle.

The complexity of the task of practical theological reflection has been described with various metaphors, such as study of the living human document<sup>1</sup> or the living human web,<sup>2</sup> but at this point of my reflection, it feels like putting this jigsaw puzzle together to

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<sup>1</sup> Anton Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience*. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Bonnie Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 60.

reveal some part of the whole picture. I have reflected on the psychological dimension of the relationships with the Bible, as well as the spiritual dimension that comes from culturally-grounded spiritual experiences. In a way, I have so far traced the way in which the interviewees experience the relationships with the Bible, on a very individual level, which has not been put in conversation with the communal, social, political dimension of such relationships, which needs to happen in this chapter. If I have looked at the lamp on their feet, light on their path, now it is time to look further to attempt to see the bigger puzzle picture.

This movement into the bigger picture also attempts to resolve a mystery in Korean American churches: given that the subaltern spirituality has the power to create communal empathy that has political subversiveness as seen in *Chunhyangjeon*, in Korean American Presbyterian Churches, whose theological identity will also overlap with an evangelical one, such social expansion of the subaltern spiritual consciousness has yet to be demonstrated. There is a nagging question why that has not happened. For example, the grassroots movement that Minjung theology described did not succeed in fertilizing the majority of Christian churches in Korea to continue such grassroots movements. Do the relationships with the Bible contribute to such phenomenon?

Which such question in mind, this chapter brings postcolonial theory into the conversation with the interpretation from the previous chapter. Themes around the practice of the Bible reading identified in chapter 3 that are not engaged in the previous chapter are engaged to construct a pastoral theology of biblical engagement through postcolonial perspectives.

## **The Need for Self-Reflection**

Looking into the relationships formed between the Bible and the Bible reader requires critical self-examination as individuals, as community, and as society bound by several layers of cultures. Especially, when the text is read from the margin or when viewed from the perspective of globalization and the cultural fluidity that modern technology brought about, such self-examination is critically important as faithful practice of discernment in Christian faith journeys. Thus, practical theologian John Reader advocates for reflexive spirituality, as “globalization, with the blurring of boundaries and frequent crossing of thresholds, requires a greater degree of self awareness and understanding.”<sup>3</sup> The complex dynamic of the rapid interchange of information, technology, goods, culture, and values require us to look deeply into ourselves to sort out our own values and identity and see our impactful existence in the web of globalization. The marginalized experience thus points toward the marginalized as well as to the center. For example, Vincent Wimbush, in his introduction to the collection of essays that paints the lived experience of the African American Bible reading, insists “some fundamental self-inventorying”<sup>4</sup> is needed by the Biblical scholars when they realize that “the substitution of African Americans as cultural-hermeneutical template in the study of the Bible is compelling because African Americans are still a generally ignored and unproblematized but haunting starting point of reference with enormous potential to trip biblical scholars and other types of scholars onto a higher level of critical

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<sup>3</sup> John Reader, *Reconstructing Practical Theology: The Impact of Globalization* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 73.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent Wimbush, “Introduction: Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures,” in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*, ed. Vincent Wimbush (New York: Continuum, 2000), 9.



(=self-) consciousness about their practices.”<sup>5</sup> As I am a pastoral theologian looking at the relationships formed between the reader and the Bible in my own culture, my self-inventory is done as a person standing in the phenomenological bracket, bringing my observation of my own community and my self into conversation with the postcolonial context of the Bible reading I observed in my study.

### **The Postcoloniality of Korean American Bible Reading**

#### *History*

The postcolonial context of Korean and Korean American Christians is convoluted and complex, which highlights the ambivalence of the Bible. Unlike the Indian context that Homi Bhabha wrestles with in his article, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Dehli, May 1817,”<sup>6</sup> where he explores the ambivalence around the text that was associated with the English Bible, a text that comes directly from the “learned pundit”<sup>7</sup> of the British empire, the missionary effort in Korea came as an aiding force for the independence movement against Japanese colonization during WWII, which was followed by the policing effort of the cold war giants, the United States and the Soviet Union that resulted in their occupying South Korea and North Korea, respectively. This brief occupation was interrupted by the Korean War, which left the whole country in need of reconstruction. The U.S. army’s presence and the political impact of the U.S. government still holds colonizing power over the Korean political situation, constantly reminding us of the mixed, rapidly changing colonialist experience that comprises the postcolonial reality of Korea. Having

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<sup>5</sup> Wimbush, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Dehli, May 1817,” in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010), 145-74.

<sup>7</sup> Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 146.

received missionaries mostly from the United States, many Korean Christians perceive evangelical Christianity from the United States as the correct form of Christianity. In the midst of such a postcolonial climate, in which the traditional past got abruptly cut off by Japanese occupation of Korea at the turn of last century, resulting in incoherent collective group self, the Bible is part of the unfamiliar newness that flooded into the rapidly changing political and cultural climate of the modern Korea. Thus, the Bible is associated with postcolonial ambivalence and anxiety.

*The Third Space: Ambivalence and Mimicry*

This ambivalence needs to be understood and addressed especially when the task of Bible reading is meaning-making, as was elucidated through the metaphor of jigsaw puzzle, used by half of my interviewees. In the postcolonial situation, the Bible is a foreign product but as it is translated into the vernacular and used in the religious life, it turns into something that is neither ours nor that of the others. Such ambivalence requires a creation of another interpretive space, if meaning-making is to happen. Homi Bhabha class such interpretive space, Third Space:

The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation. The pronominal I of the proposition cannot be made to address—in its own words—the subject of enunciation, for this is not personable, but remains a spatial relation within the schemata and strategies of discourse. The meaning of the utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other. This ambivalence is emphasized when we realize that there is no way that the content of the proposition will reveal the structure of its positionality; no way that context can be mimetically read off from the content.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Homi Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010), 53.

This third space, sometimes turning into a concept that is in danger of being claimed by anyone triangulating any two spaces related to the self, is inherently a very political space, in which the power dynamic of the postcolonial person who was formerly unable to enunciate her positionality is finally positioned to voice herself. What Bhabha calls the “act of interpretation” is done through such voice, but he also notes that this voice is limited by the postcolonial ambivalence, only being able to voice out the self in terms of the ambivalent spatial relation; this space is a very unstable place to occupy, because it is colored with the ambivalence of being neither/nor and both/and. As one of the marked power dynamics within this ambivalence, Bhabha names mimicry, which is an important process of finding agency in one’s voice and a process of claiming power in the midst of the discomfort of staying in this third space: in other words, as Bhabha says mimicry is “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.”<sup>9</sup> In terms of the colonial project of appropriation, which is the original intention of the colonizers, which is in itself a complex thing to name in Korean soil, mimicry becomes a mirror in which the colonizer finds his or her distorted self image and threatening power resemblance: through the humiliating process of appropriating the power-abusive other, the colonized dangerously obtains certain forms of agency to bring to the third space. Interestingly, this is also the space I occupy as a researcher, a reflective and authentic place that I can finally articulate, just as did many of the international students in postcolonial biblical scholar Stephen Moore’s class. He says:

A striking number of students coming into our classes, international students in particular, with intense commitments to social justice, vernacular hermeneutics,

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<sup>9</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010), 122.

liberative praxis, and activist politics, feel themselves personally addressed by Homi Bhabha and discover in critical categories such as colonial ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity analytic tools that enable them to reconceptualize their own relationships to their frequently complex socio-cultural locations in ways that they experience as transforming and even empowering—as do I myself.<sup>10</sup>

As I am writing about my Korean culture's most intimate inner dynamic of spirituality, writing in English to demonstrate my scholarly capacity in this linguistic environment, I am also participating in this process of mimicry, claiming ambivalent power of knowledge about others, in order to voice the strength that I find in what haunts the Christian experience of spirituality in my Korean interviewees' Bible reading. On another level, as I have named in chapter 2, I also carry the function of the native informant, possibly betraying some crucial information about my people for the sake of scholarship, exposing sacred dynamics to my audience, who may or may not be among my people, thus may or may not handle such intimate information appropriately. Such vulnerability marks the ambivalence of the work of "enunciating" my own voice, yet as a way to clarify the ambiguity that conceals the potential for better pastoral strategy and for spiritual maturity characterized by complexity, it is a necessary task.

### *Spectrality*

In the postcolonial climate marked by ambivalence, there is a ghostly presence of the past that haunts the practical theological reflection. I have articulated one aspect of such ghostliness, by exploring the Confucian spirituality that influences Korean American Christian spirituality. What I face here is probably what Gayatri Spivak calls the "spectrality of reason," which "haunts the merely empirical, dislocating it from

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Moore, "Questions of Biblical Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi; or, the Postcolonial and the Postmodern," in *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersection*, ed. Stephen Moore and Fernando Segovia (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 84.

itself.”<sup>11</sup> This language of spectrality provides a “powerful trope for acknowledging the presence of the invisible in the ordinary world of the visible,”<sup>12</sup> as Laura Donaldson says, a concept that many feminists have attempted to name for decades. As the practical theological task of understanding the different layers of the experience has brought such spectrality to the surface of my analysis, it is necessary to face it on a different level if this is to provide any insight for transformative effect by disturbing what is considered ordinary. Laura Donaldson aptly points out, Spivak asks us to consider “how haunting interrupts the hegemonic through ‘hallucinatory’ confrontations with other histories.”<sup>13</sup> She continues: “this transformative effect is precisely what postcolonial and feminist criticism has hoped to achieve, although spectrality and haunting require one to engage with these altered realities on deeper levels than mere intellect.”<sup>14</sup> Such engaging of the specter is an uneasy task, and as it happens in the ambivalent space of postcolonial reality, this task is all the more uncomfortable.

### *Postcolonial Anxiety*

My interviewees tell me that they have experienced the subversive power of the subjectivity of the Bible in their Bible reading. This subjectivity empathized with them and thus moved their heart, rather than imposing on them with its authority what to do. But such transformation that happened through such empathic moments can be quite fragile, which seems to point to the discomfort of being in the third space, haunted by the spectrality of the past. In spite of his daily, diligent meditation on the sermon passages, Henry wonders when such a state in which he continues to live in grace will end and

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<sup>11</sup> Gayatri Spivak, “Ghostwriting,” *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer, 1995): 67.

<sup>12</sup> Laura Donaldson, “Gospel Hauntings,” in *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*, ed. Stephen Moore and Fernando Segovia (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 98.

<sup>13</sup> Donaldson, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Donaldson, 98.

when his previous disappointment with Christian communities will suddenly overwhelm him. He says, “Now, I am starting to take baby steps in my faith journey. Knowing how stubborn I can be, I worry that someday one of those disappointments will make me turn my back against the church. I feel like I may never return.” Behind Daniel’s forceful testimonial self-presentation, there lurks a sense of anxiety: he was the one who would have the most interaction with me outside of the interview time, trying to figure out what the interview will entail so he can prepare what to say and later trying to make sure some of the details will be kept out of the reach of others. On the first interview day, his newly wed wife accompanied him and sat at another table during the interview, which I sensed as a way of checking me out. As powerful and precious as their transformative moments have been for them, such experiences are fragile when brought back to their communities.

### *Protecting the Bible*

The anxiety stemming from such fragility needs to be guarded with strong protection. When biblical scholar Randall Bailey found a possibly abusive biblical passage colored with positivity by a womanist theologian Dolores Williams, he laments, “What seems to be in play here is the need to make peace with the biblical text at all costs.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, I find that to be part of my own impulses when facing criticism of biblical texts that I have cherished as meaningful for myself, in spite of my own critical stance grounded in feminist/liberation/postcolonial theologies. I assume such protective need is what motivates Elsa Tamez to articulate this:

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<sup>15</sup> Randall Bailey, “The Danger of Ignoring One’s Own Cultural Bias in Interpreting the Text,” in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 80.

The tendency of some First World radical feminists to reject the Bible is... an exaggerated reaction. I think that by assigning too much importance to these peripheral texts, many leave aside the central message, which is profoundly liberating. From my point of view, it is precisely the gospel's spirit of justice and freedom that neutralizes antifemale texts.<sup>16</sup>

Tamez' explicit distinction between the central and peripheral messages of the Bible may be a very simplistic categorization, but it actually reflects how my interviewees read the Bible. Mina who has grown up in one of the most conservative Presbyterian denominations in Korea, went through rather austere spiritual discipline. She sees that biblical passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11-12 ("Let women learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent") should be read in terms of its historical circumstances rather than be directly applied to contemporary situation in which she teaches the Bible. This passage has the potential to be detrimental to her authority as the Bible study group leader, a role that has fed her spiritual life significantly. All the more, in her reference to her family spiritual legacy that continued not only through the men in the family but mostly through the women, she adopts the formula Jacob in Genesis uses to describe God as "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac"<sup>17</sup>: she invokes her God as "God of my great grandmother and God of my grandmother and God of my Mother." She regards the above Timothy message "peripheral" to and distant from the "central" message reflected in John's Gospel 9:1-3, which she thinks reveals God's will:

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned: he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him (NRSV)."

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<sup>16</sup> Elsa Tamez, "Women's Rereading of the Bible," in *With Passion and Compassion*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 176.

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 32:9 (NRSV).

When revealing God's works through the person is the central message of her and her son's life and of the Bible, the Timothy passage that presumably silences her teaching is a passage that can quickly get negotiated as belonging to the past. This layperson deals with the passage in a way that resembles historical criticism.

*Inerrancy, Orthodoxy, and Spiritual Hygiene*

In spite of such negotiations that happen on the individual level, the pronounced doctrine of the evangelical stance of the Korean American Presbyterian churches that adhere to inerrancy of the Bible reveals the anxiety that springs from the third space that these churches occupy. In his analysis of the ethnological study of Asian Americans' Bible reading, Tat-siong Benny Liew connects adherence to the doctrine of the Bible's inerrancy to Asian American need to fulfill the "model minority identity" of which he offers an image he found in his interviews:

The *well-worn Study Bible firmly in hand* makes the power of biblical authority and/or inerrancy one that even ordained members of the church must wrestle with, a double-edgedness that can be as threatening to institutional order as much as it grants legitimacy.<sup>18</sup>

By mimicking the British-born, American expanded form of evangelicalism through their engagement of the Bible, the political and spiritual power that the Asian Americans experienced in their encounter with evangelical Christianity is recreated now in themselves. However, as with any mimicking dynamic, it is a process of producing an identity, to borrow Bhabha's language again, "inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity."<sup>19</sup> Liew notices that there is a rage behind such model identity that he

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<sup>18</sup> Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Asian Americans, Bible Believers: An Ethnological Study," in *MisReading America: Scriptures and Difference*, ed. Vincent Wimbush with the assistance of Lalruatkima and Melissa Renee Reid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 203.

<sup>19</sup> Homi Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010), 63.



had a glimpse of when he found his interviewees struggle when their experience of the Bible fails to affirm the doctrine of inerrancy:

The process of reproducing one's model minority identity, like the process of reproducing one's faith in the Bible's infallibility, momentarily breaks down in the inability to account for the friction and failure of the textbook example. And when this happens, all the trauma of Asian American history—of war, of displacement, of exile, of difference—that she has submerged or sublated to being the “good” subject of the United States and the “good” reader of the Bible comes rushing back in an emotional, even spiritual, tempest whose melancholy cannot be reconciled or contained, ghostly memories that gesture to a potentially different time.<sup>20</sup>

This dynamic is again found with a ghost, in Liew's study identified as the traumatic experiences of Asian Americans. On the Korean peninsula this may be a process to mimic an empire of the past: I have in mind the idea of “small China (소중화, 小中華).” Originally a concept that denoted East Asian countries that had experienced cultural influence from China, which provided chances for them to develop more dynamic culture, it became a politically loaded concept that spoke into the narcissistic development of the *Joseon yangban* class. In *Joseon* dynasty, “small China” came to mean for *Joseon* to replace China as its legitimate cultural and philosophical heir after the mainland China, *Ming* Dynasty in which Neo-Confucianism germinated, was conquered by the *Manchus*, who established *Qing* dynasty. *Joseon* people had emotional difficulty in accepting *Qing* as a legitimate dynasty because of the marginal origination of the *Manchu* people. As *Joseon* was established over the devout nationalistic Buddhist country of *Goryeo* dynasty, the philosophical assertion that *Joseon* dynasty claimed in its political realms was rigid. When *Qing* dynasty took over the rule of mainland China, *Joseon*'s own political legitimacy as that of a small country that needed to maintain a good relationship with the

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<sup>20</sup> Liew, 205.

Chinese empire was threatened. Resembling the movement that Henry was taking, namely jumping more deeply into the Bible, his selfobject, when he felt threatened by the possible narcissistic hurt that can come from pursuing the question of why God did not call him earlier, *Joseon*'s political elites also had taken similar route by moving more deeply into their ideology. Through the idea of "small China," they claimed that they were the ones who were practicing the Neo-Confucianism in the form intended by original scholars during the *Ming* Dynasty. Echoing such an impulse to maintain their status quo through the legitimacy of their philosophical and religious inheritance, the inerrancy claim of Korean Christians is a politically loaded legitimacy claim, reflecting the sense of threat that can uproot their foundation so easily, just as *Qing* China's establishment was a political as well as an identity threat. Rigid orthodoxy claims are often rooted in such anxiety: it reflects the deep need to solidify one's identity with certainty in the midst of uneasy climate and circumstances.

Biblical inerrancy is intricately related to such need for orthodoxy in Korean and Korean American churches. In my interviews, the orthodoxy questions lurk on the boundaries of the interviewees' powerful transformative experiences. As Daniel shares his testimonies of how he experienced God and the role Bible played in his life, he repeatedly and in a joking tone said, "you must think I'm crazy," which I brought back to him in my letter to him so that he could articulate the layered experience behind that remark. As his experience is constituted of spiritual elements like prophecies and revelations that are not commonly experienced by all Christians, he found that not only him but also his leaders were constantly questioned about the orthodoxy of their experience and practices by the church officials. Daniel says such questions can only be

clarified when such prophecies and revelations come true in individual's life. When his experience was constantly held in suspicion by church officials and even his own mother, he found that he needed to persevere such tension by holding on to his own conviction for the legitimacy of his faith and experience. His remarks about craziness also leak the concern he feels when he crosses a boundary from his spiritual home to interact with those who belong to different spiritual homes. Instead of being a threat to others, he suggests, "you must think I'm crazy": a quick belittling of himself yet also a pointer toward the wonders that may render craziness in the listener, which is a skillful border negotiation in the Third Space. Mina also tells of her experience of navigating through different speaking environments when she is an invited speaker, as she knows so very well that even a remark on the spirituality of her experience can get her into trouble in some denominations. The example she gives is such a benign expression of her spirituality:

When God affirms me, I can feel warm spiritual presence, maybe like a dove landing or maybe like spring rain or maybe like a warm breeze, you know we don't know where the wind comes from. But all of these expressions, I need to be very careful about them when I speak. I can easily be treated as heretic, you know.

Such care that Mina needs to take points to the anxiety of the groups that need to be orthodox by not mixing with newness. Spiritual experiences, within the space marked by the anxious need to define the identity of group by strict orthodoxy, thus seem to be in danger of being experienced as threats.

I call the strong need to keep such orthodox status as the result of the anxiety of occupying such postcolonial space "spiritual hygiene." This spiritual hygiene is characterized by its deep concern for protection from contaminated spirituality, or in other words heresy, whether the contaminant is other religious elements, emotional

experiences, different doctrines, new age movement, music, or even physical exercises like Yoga: all of these can be seen as elements of heresy. With short history of Christianity's presence in the Korean soil that did not allow Christian values to turn into moral values of Korean culture, the ambiguous border that Korean Christianity occupies is a dangerous place where lack of spiritual hygiene could lead to devastatingly dangerous spiritual experiences, as demonstrated by burgeoning spiritual movements that often prove to be abusive. Resembling the Peoples Temple movement by charismatic religious leader Jim Jones that ended with Jonestown massacre,<sup>21</sup> there are several impactful spiritual movements, like that of JMS<sup>22</sup> and *Shincheonji*,<sup>23</sup> that proved to be spiritually abusive to their great numbers of followers. As those abusive spiritual activities often involve much emotional manipulation, one of the important questions of spiritual hygiene is how one's heart is moved or whether one's heart is moved in the right way. Jeong-min Suh notices that this phenomenon of anxious concern for spiritual hygiene is historically rooted in the complex colonial experience of first generation Korean Christians' effort to claim spiritual agency, which was subdued to the control of the missionaries who named them heretics to avoid any approving independent governing

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<sup>21</sup> Peoples Temple movement was led by Jim Jones who attempted to build a utopic community of Jonestown in Guyana, which eventually failed in its purpose. The nine hundred some members of the community who were present in that community on November 18, 1978 died of cyanide poisoning orchestrated by Jones at a pavilion of the community.

<sup>22</sup> JMS stands for this movement's charismatic leader, Jung Myung-seok, who among many things claimed sexual intercourse with him guarantees salvation. He is known to be a charismatic and persuasive preacher and bases his claims on biblical passages as he advocates the inerrancy of the Bible. Currently he is imprisoned accused of rape and sexual assaults.

<sup>23</sup> Shincheonji is a religious group founded by Manhwe Lee, who claims that the new heaven and earth prophesized in the book of Revelation will be inherited by the 144,000 people that belong to the twelve tribes of Israel who are composed of members of his sect, basing his claim again on Revelation. This group is known to enter other churches disguised as new members and eventually create schism within those churches to absorb those who build complaints against the churches into Shincheonji. Thus many Korean Christian leaders regard this group's activity as psychological abuse of the group dynamics within existing churches.

bodies that were organized by Korean Christians in the 1910's and 1920's.<sup>24</sup> What needs to be noted is the centrality of the authority of the Bible in discerning the spiritual hygiene of any religious experience. The power of the Bible is double-edged even in this matter: the authority of the Bible is the central tenet of the hygienic form of Christianity, but the heretic groups also use biblical authority to make their claim, interpreting it to fit their agenda. Thus, the Bible as the guiding principle to keep Christians safe betrays the sense of safety by becoming a dangerous tool that gets controlled by the others from whom those spiritually hygienic Christians want to protect their identity.

### *Community*

The spirituality of the movement of the heart experienced in biblical engagement is thus vulnerable, as it is happening on this anxious boundary that the Christianity of Koreans occupies. Could it be that such anxiety mobilizes such movement of heart all the more powerfully? What is remarkable in the experiences of the interviewees is that their heart moving is experienced as initiated by the subjectivity of the Bible, thus by God, as it is God's voice that is believed to be revealed through the Bible. It is an experience of reversal power, testifying to the Christian understanding of incarnation, as the creator personally moved the heart of the creature: a robust language of love and care. If the specter from the past haunts this experience, what my interviewees experience is subversive in terms of the power dynamic played out in the process of moving the heart: while the most liberating heart moving from the past required the *Han*-reducing sincerity of *Chunhyang* or of the one seeking transformation, the contemporary Christian experience of Bible reading was created by God's own proving of God's sincerity, love

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<sup>24</sup> Jeong-Min Suh, "An Understanding of Orthodoxy and Heresy in Korean Church History," *Ecumenical Review*, 57, no. 4 (2005): 451-62.

and understanding. The relational dynamic created through this heart-moving is a strong stream that goes against the anxiety produced in this third space, allowing the interviewees to have grounding experiences: Kathy felt hopeful and peaceful, Henry felt enjoyment, and Daniel found his identity solidifying as a speaker of testimonies.

However, from the spectrality I also learned that spirituality of the moving the heart of heaven also involves the moving of the heart of the community, as it charges them with empathy for the *Han* experienced due to injustice and hope for a better community. Such communal heart moving was found to be the central concern of Minjung theology or feminist theology, yet somehow such theological movement hardly finds its home in Korean or Korean American churches. Dale Andrews struggles with a similar predicament, as he finds that black theology that fueled the Civil Rights movement has lost its stance within the black churches. What blocks the communal empathy experienced through the heart moving from translating into a prophetic voice toward the society? Andrews finds it in the unsuccessful formation of black church's identity:

I maintain that a central cause in the displacement of black churches was their own unsuccessful socialization of black humanity. Their ecclesial image and ministerial praxis emphasized a reobjectification of reality based on equality in a religious culture of individualism and a subsequent privatization of religion. That is to say, the church as refuge, grounded in a faith identity increasingly predominated by conversion, personal salvation, and religious piety, could not sustain the necessary congruity between the life experience of African Americans and the resurgent expectations of social equality and political-economic liberation. Neither could the churches continue to create successful resocialization of black life, and therefore faith identity, within their own doors.<sup>25</sup>

The emphasis on personal salvation and religious piety of the evangelical faith that the black churches embraced provided a sense of equality on the religious ground, but the

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<sup>25</sup> Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 63-4.

communal moral sense that powered the black church's earlier civic movement was thwarted by the individualism fostered by the evangelical faith. There seems to be a parallel process that happens in Korean American Christian community. The individualism's pull away from communality showed up in Daniel's interview. Feeling demotivated to read the Bible as he suffered in bed due to his knee injury, he had a moment in which he was moved by seeing his community's diligent engagement of the Bible. However, instead of attributing such movement of heart to his communal experience, he quickly finds a way to discredit that experience to refocus himself on the individual piety:

But it wasn't until like one of my older mentors took me to a children's retreat where there were a lot of my youth students, whom I took care of when I was younger, I was seeing them get on their knees and pray and read the scripture and they were so excited, and I was reconvicted to get back on it. This is ridiculous, what am I doing, how can I turn away from something that kept me going for so long, so. (to see it in the community just uplifted you so much) yeah the community. But I don't want to say that I'm moved by the community, like I move with the crowd, because I do find that my most powerful movement is through personal experience with God. (That touches you much deeper.) Oh yeah. Much deeper.

Daniel's response reflects what Derek Tidball describes as the evangelical expression of the relationship with God. In Tidball's view, relationships or communal experience can be where spiritual growth happens, but such spiritual growth is not the ideal; the ideal spirituality germinates in personal relationship with God:

If we are to know God then we need intentionally to set aside time and space to nurture our relationship with him through both listening to him and speaking to him. Of course he can be encountered through other people and in the hurly-burly of life. But if we want the relationship with God to mature then, as with any human relationship, it needs to be cultivated personally to afford both focus and intimacy.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Derek Tidball, "The Bible in Evangelical Spirituality," in *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church*, ed. Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes (London: Dalton, Longman and Todd, 2005), 269.

If Daniel's experience gives a glimpse of the generation of Korean Americans who grew up in the States, whose spiritual formation happened through deep involvement in the evangelical faith, Henry's experience contrasts with Daniel's as the experience of an immigrant Korean American who brings perspective that is not formed within the evangelical faith, as he converted to Christianity late in his life. It is interesting how his understanding of faith can expand into communal sense of faith, when he is not yet informed of the evangelical doctrine of personal salvation by faith:

I used to think when you die that's the end. But as now I believe that my father will be in heaven I am not as sad as I was when my mother passed away; even though he did not believe in Jesus, since I have accepted Jesus as my Lord, he would be in the new world, born again there. Before, I used to be anxious and fearful about death, but now I have peace. I think this peace is one of the gifts of faith.

When he is not informed about the doctrine, he finds his own spirituality expanding to his family, evidenced by his sense of peace. Such communal understanding of spirituality may have been what the individualistic grounding of evangelical faith hindered.<sup>27</sup> Dale Andrews names the image of the black church as refuge as a metaphor or identity of the black church that interrupted the growth of social morality that used to fuel social engagement. Such an image, with its growth-limiting function, is what relational cultural theorists call a culturally controlling image. Culturally controlling images, as Jordan notes, "like stereotypes of 'mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers' are actually lies that hold people in their 'place' and induce the notion that change cannot happen."<sup>28</sup> There

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<sup>27</sup> In other words, it can be said that the colonial form of Christianity, embedded with Western values related to individuality, rendered a more communal spirituality indigenous to Korean Confucian settings suspect and therefore undesirable; Korean and Korean American Christians instead mimicked the power of the evangelical colonizers and the value they placed on individual salvation and experience of God.

<sup>28</sup> Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 29.



may be many corresponding culturally controlling images of the Korean American churches, but the one I identified in the interviews is that of missional empire.

### *Culturally Controlling Image of Missional Empire*

The image of missional empire is a powerful metaphor for Korean Christians. It uses biblical inspiration combined with personal testimonies to vigorously mimic the power of the center, the object of the postcolonial yearning that happens in the margin. Just like the missionaries from the Western empires have come to the margin, that is Korea, Korean Christians are now the subjects of the Kingdom of God reaching out of its margin with the power of God that will transform the margin into a territory of this Kingdom. Through such mimicry, the subjectivity silenced by the impact of past colonization, war and their aftermath gains voice and power. Through biblical encouragement, the missional empire now carries both power and the heavenly mandate in the persons transformed by the Biblical subjectivity's empathy: as they are moved by God, their best expression of gratitude would be to reciprocate by spreading the news of God, because they can trust that God will again move another person's heart. Thus the church can focus on this project of missional empire to expand the empire's boundary further till the end of the earth. It seems that the communal empathy that motivates any social engagement is concentrated in the missional empire as the final stage of one's spiritual growth in the Korean and Korean American churches. It is a sincere response to the narcissistic growth and the mutual empathy experienced in their transformative moments, as this movement addresses both these elements: through the empire the idealizing need of the self finds greater opportunity to be systematically idealized as a participant of the bigger biblical mission. And the task of introducing another person to

the dynamic of heart movement by God is meaningful as it effectively engages the communal dynamic that the heart movement produces. It seems to me that Minjung theology, which was the Korean-born liberation theology that focused on naming the pain of oppression and providing visions of social empowerment, was not successful in engaging this central dynamic of personal heart-movement because it failed to mobilize the community in the way Evangelical Christian did. Naming of the *Han* and pain was not enough, when the basic psychological needs of the hearts of the minjung are not sufficiently empathized. To minjung theologian's disappointment, the minjung, which means people, responded more to the Evangelical churches that focused on personal heart moving through the individualized soteriology that affirmed and empathized with the minjung's needs for mirroring, idealizing and twinship transference along with their pain.

However, the image of the missional empire has a controlling factor: it guards its boundary with rigid theological categories, which I explored in terms of anxious creation of and guarding of orthodoxy, and recreates the colonizing dynamic on its margin, namely in the mission field. The problem of the reproduction of the colonizing dynamics in the mission field is far outside the scope of this dissertation. However, here I will hypothesize that when the missional empire is fueled by the psychological needs of Christians to have their grandiosity mirrored and to find another relationship in which they can have their heart movement empathized together, it is in danger of falling into what pastoral theologian Don Browning called "philosophical ethical egoism."<sup>29</sup> By philosophical ethical egoism he means, "a view of human health that put self-regard prior to other-regard and, in fact, made other-regard a derivative of self-regard." It is what the

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<sup>29</sup> Don Browning, *Reviving Christian Humanism: The New Conversation on Spirituality, Theology, and Psychology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 58.

secular and religious therapy that sanctified the value of individuals as sovereign promised as the human fulfillment. While Browning's argument of such egoism comes out of his critique of the philosophical grounding of psychotherapy that has had impact on Christian anthropology and pastoral theology, it seems to speak to Korean and Korean American Christian experience, probably due to its brokenness that the postcolonial reality needs to deal with. Browning names such a starting point as a possible reason why such egoism was fostered: "Human brokenness—whether conceptualized as neurosis, psychosis, or sin—entails an element of self-depletion and requires an outside agent or therapist giving empathy, warmth, positive regard, or grace to renew a positive sense of self-regard."<sup>30</sup> As understandable as the self-expansion of the missional empire is, such egoism raises questions about morality, a question of justice that is an integral part of Christian tradition. Through my own training as a pastoral counselor, I found that every ethical line that I needed to draw to practice the pastoral care with integrity had uncomfortable aspects that limited my sense of what love and care means. Such discomfort is the boundary blurring practice of *Jeong*, a form of love and care that is culturally engraved in myself. As W. Anne Joh has articulated, "Jeong has the capacity to transgress clear and even forbidden boundaries that maintain the separation between Self and Other."<sup>31</sup> Such transgression turns out to be an integral part of the caregiving activities practiced in church, neighborhood, and families. Thus, ethical boundaries challenged my notion of care from the gut level. In this interestingly challenging cultural circumstance, then, such philosophical ethical egoism is again blurred in Korean and

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<sup>30</sup> Browning, 59.

<sup>31</sup> W. Anne Joh, "The Transgressive Power of Jeong," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 153.

Korean American context. The task of expanding the kingdom of God as the missional empire motivated by the psycho-spiritual experience of the Bible reading blurs the boundary between the self and other, making the clarification of morality more difficult. I find Don Browning's movement into the golden rule as a way to find spaces for altruism particularly challenging as a way to articulate ethical direction for Korean and Korean American Christians: with the blurred boundary between the self and the other, doing unto others as one would have done to oneself can become a tautological engagement of egoism. In other words, what one does to others as one would have it done to oneself could be what one was doing to begin with. This points to the challenge of discerning the ethical sense that could point to the sensitivity of the power dynamic on the boundary of this empire. Ethics of altruism find a very ambivalent place, when the missional empire is driven by individualistically driven communal persons.

In spite of such challenge, ethical thinking that can turn the Korean and Korean American Christian to be more conscious about the injustice that permeates at the boundary of the missional empire is needed. Dale Andrews finds that such individualistic morality is driven by the "personal salvation and religious piety emphasized" in evangelical faith, which has hindered black churches engaging the social justice issues. He finds "individual thriving" an alternate form of engagement of the individual needs for individualism. According to him,

Individual thriving is quite different from individualism. Individualism disrupts corporate solidarity in the pursuit of self-interests. The opportunity and enhancement of individual thriving, for each and all, is a goal of communal action and therefore a communal responsibility. Individual fulfillment means something quite different from self-interest. It is incumbent upon our churches to resocialize the realities of self-interest intrinsic to personal salvation and religious piety.

Human fulfillment and individual thriving fit well within the corporate vision of liberation and black ecclesiology.<sup>32</sup>

Such individual thriving is what the interviewees testify to in their private reading of the Bible. They have expanded the heart moving experienced through their reading by expanding their relational connections to others in their community, evidencing relational cultural theory's concept of five good things, such as zest, motivation to take actions, increased understanding of self and other, increased sense of self worth, and desire for more connections. It is when their experience collides with the church's proclamation of the missional empire that the image limits their expansive relational sense. In Amy's struggle at her workplace, her theological motivation that she sees as the ultimate goal of her own suffering, is introducing the gospel to her co-workers. In Mina's account of her pattern of spiritual discernment of her own sins, she ultimately sees that God's intention is to save souls even through her mistakes. While their participation in the missional empire thus creates meaning in them, the sense that such participation is the ultimate reason for their relational activities puts rather rigid boundaries on the more creative possibilities that their relationships can produce. What if they are encouraged to pursue such creative possibilities? What would that do to their perspectives? Would that widen their scope enough to see other important contextual issues, such as ethical issues and social justice issues?

### *Postcolonial Imagination through the Unfinished Puzzle*

To put these questions together: is postcolonial imagination possible for the Korean American Bible readers? Kwok Pui-lan constructs her idea of postcolonial imagination with three threads of imagination: historical, dialogical, and diasporic

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<sup>32</sup> Andrews, 65.

imagination. She notices that such imagination not as “imagining the subject as the ‘transcendental I’ within the liberal project, who has the power to shape the world and to conjure meanings”<sup>33</sup> but as a complex process that happens through “the cracks, the fissures, and the openings, which refuse to be shaped into an framework, and which are often consigned to the periphery.”<sup>34</sup> Kwok’s call to engage the three threads of imagination is to be cautious about the multiple dimensions of the work that is required. Through the memories that cannot be erased through the colonizing effort, through the fluid and contingent condition of the contact zones where multiplicity thrives, and through keen consciousness about the dynamic of the marginalized diaspora, subversive postcolonial imagination is possible. It is interesting that Kwok points to Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s language of quilt-making to describe her process. Schüssler Fiorenza describes: “The quilt-maker carefully stiches material fragments and pieces into an overall design that gives meaning to the individual scraps of material.”<sup>35</sup> The image of quilt is very similar to the language that I found in almost all of the interviews, namely that of the puzzle. While the quilt would need to be put together piece by piece in order to be sewn together, the process of putting together a puzzle can start from any point where two pieces of puzzle can be matched together. In the narratives of the interviewees, they find joy in seeing parts of the puzzle coming together as a hopeful glimpse into the possible whole of the picture, which they trust to come together, yet cannot see. It is an image of narrative forming and meaning construction.

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<sup>33</sup> Pui-lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 30.

<sup>34</sup> Kwok, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1994), xxii.

The particularly interesting element of this process is that the unfinished puzzles have holes, the parts that have no puzzle pieces covering the empty parts. In spite of what they learn from the pulpit, if they have not wrestled with that particular part in puzzlement, frustration, anxiety or what not, those parts are still an unknown crack whose meaning has not come clear. This crack, the not-yet realized part of whole story, seems to resemble the little dark windows of the Greek orthodox icons, which invite the imagination of the beholder to look through the window and contemplate on the imaginative world, perhaps the heavens, and beyond. Those moments of empty spots are similar to those times when the subjectivity of the Bible is not yet realized to form a mutual relationship, such as in the time when Daniel would simply read through the passage without thinking about it, or when Amy is struggling with the discomfort of indecisiveness in her career choice. Yet, this is where the interviewees recognize their heart movement, because when this empty hole finally makes sense, they find rich narrative in there. Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley write, “stories are privileged and imaginative acts of self-interpretation.”<sup>36</sup> When we put our experiences into a narrative, we begin to construct the meaning of our experience. Anderson and Foley tell us, “whether we are conscious or not of this need, it is nonetheless true that our search for meaning is a search for an appropriate narrative for life”<sup>37</sup> Craig Bartholomew points out that it is possible this is how human beings are formed,<sup>38</sup> borrowing Paul Ricoeur’s

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<sup>36</sup> Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 5.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson and Foley, 27.

<sup>38</sup> Craig Bartholomew, “In Front of the Text: The Quest of Hermeneutics,” in *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church*, ed. Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), 140.

understanding. For Paul Ricoeur, a hermeneutic phenomenology philosopher who was deeply concerned about narratives and hermeneutics, human beings are

Inherently narratively shaped, or story-shaped, with narrative offering a way of configuring a discordant concordance of time. As with metaphor, rather than seeing narrative as ornamental and dispensable...narrative is necessary. Human identity and existence cannot be understood apart from the way in which we 'story' our lives.<sup>39</sup>

Daniel tells me the Bible is an intricate part of such meaning building. For him, as he weaves his life episodes with the Bible, the Bible turns into a language that he can speak to others in relationship. He tells me:

I do feel like the Bible is going to play a much bigger part of my life. Because only certainly because like prayer I do feel like it's a personal time with you and God, unless you are in group prayer and praying with other people, but the scripture you can always share. It's a shared experience. So I do feel like it is something you share with others more than you can with the prayers. I'm not going to go around telling what I hear in my prayers, or what I prayed about, but I can always give an email and go like "Heidi, I read this in the Bible today. It is such an amazing thing. God spoke to me this way." But I don't think I'm going to email you and go like, " Heidi, I prayed this prayer and God spoke to me in this way." You know. (I see. It is the common language) Yeah, it's like the center of Christian Body, the word really literally feeds us. It is a shared experience. So. (It feeds the Body, makes the community) Something much more tangible with the community, the sense of community.

As Daniel articulates here, the story that builds as he weaves his story with the Bible is a narrative that belongs not only to him, but also to the community as a meal that sustains it. Indeed, it seems that such communal growth is what narratives can create. David Perrin points out that spirituality needs to be reflected on hermeneutically to overcome the individualism that is deeply seated in the psychological understanding of spirituality:

The current celebration of liberal individualism—that is, self-actualization theories at the expense of “wider or deeper purposes in living”—is problematic to Christian spirituality, to say the least. Paul Ricoeur indicates, “In hermeneutical reflection—or in reflective hermeneutics—the constitution of the self is

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<sup>39</sup> Dan Stiver, *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 115.



contemporaneous with the constitution of meaning.” But the self that is produced in hermeneutic reflection is never for oneself, but a self that brings a bigger openness to being-in-the-world for others. Hermeneutical method implies an expanded and expanding ontology—a greater share of being-in-the world. For Christians, this is a participation in Being itself—in God’s life in the world, which is always a life for others. “Much of the resonance between liberal individualism and most psychological theories derives from the fact that both assume a heavily instrumental view of human life.” Christian spirituality, and its ontology, could offer a useful corrective.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the imagination that becomes part of the narrative and eventually transforms with the puzzle pieces that get put together forms an identity of the person. For it to be a postcolonial imagination, such imagination requires a serious reflection on the postcolonial reality that needs to be seen from historical, dialogical, and diasporic perspectives. In other words, it requires being haunted by the spectrality of the past and taking a critical and self-reflective look at the ever-evolving border experience that we as postcolonial persons find ourselves on or we as the mission empire’s colonizing subjects create when we contact the margin of this empire. When such postcolonial imagination happens, we find cracks in the controlling image of the missional empire and imagine a different picture in which ethical social engagement can expand.

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<sup>40</sup> David Perrin, “The Uneasy Relationship Between Christian Spirituality and the Human Sciences: Psychology as a Test Case,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2007), 185.

## CHAPTER 6

### PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING STRATEGIES

To wrap up this practical theological reflection, I am coming back to the triangular relationship that forms among the pastoral caregiver, the pastoral care seeker, and the Bible, when the Bible is conceptualized as scripture, holding its own subjectivity. Through this interdisciplinary practical theological journey, I have encountered various images that hold possible layers of meanings together: that of resonance of violin string as a metaphor for the movement of the heart and that of puzzle as a metaphor for the process of meaning making. Holding in mind the understanding that these images and findings bring to the relationship between the Bible reader and the Bible, the next task is to bring the pastoral person back to the relationship, figuring out how to pastorally relate to that relationship. Here I would like to engage one of the above images again to conceptualize the pastoral theological work to be done. Consider the metaphor of resonance: the resonance on the violin string that moves only when the fitting pitch creates deep beautiful sound that moves the body of the musician but by itself, it does not quite create music. A piece of music is created when multiples of such resonating sounds are put together in each instrument, and when the sounds of multiple instruments are put together they create music that resonates in the hearts of the listeners on various levels. Each of such music pieces has its own story that gets interpreted by the composer, the musician, and the listeners: this story is the contact point where the metaphor of resonance and puzzle come together to form a confluence.

Another aspect of the images of music and puzzle is that they are both spatial events. On the one hand, it is obvious that puzzle occupies a two or three dimensional

space. The holes in the unfinished puzzle would also invite us into another dimension as we explored in the previous chapter. On the other hand, resonance impacts the body of the violin, bodies of the musician and listeners by entering the spaces within those bodies. Harmony of the orchestra impacts the space in which it performs resonating throughout the space entering into and moving inside the bodies occupying the space. With such spatial images inspiring me, I suggest that pastoral strategies needs care for such spaces, enlarging the space in which such music and puzzle, or transformative heart movement and complex spiritual growth happen. In other words, pastoral care is a process of enlarging the space for theological and spiritual reflection providing such reflection grounds to germinate, rather than imposing on pastoral person or the pastoral care seeker theological, behavioral norms. For the sake of enlarging such space, I will review what I have learned from this research that helped me to expand my own theological and spiritual reflection space, as a suggestion for pastoral strategies.

### **Learning Pertinent to Pastoral Care and Counseling**

#### *The Characteristic and the Power of the Subjectivity of the Bible*

I think the pastoral strategy needs to first consider how the Bible is engaged. For Wayne Oates, writing from the era when the scripture principle was the norm, the Bible was with subjectivity, “a book that speaks with an independent reality.”<sup>1</sup> However, such subjectivity came also with specific forms of authority; Oates describes the Bible as a “handbook of church and personal discipline, a treasury of ideals of human thought, feeling, and conduct as these experiences are lived out under the rule of God.”<sup>2</sup> For the

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Oates, *The Bible in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Oates, 28.

Bible to be the handbook that disciplines, the subjectivity of the Bible forms the “power-over” structure that roams over the agency of the reader, generating rules to live by. What I have heard from my interviewees, however, draws a significantly different picture from this power-over image. When Mina talks about the experience of the “lamp on my feet, and light on my path,” the guidance that did not provide her a long-term vision was valuable not as the disciplinary guidance but as an element of the puzzle that eventually came together to form a meaning. It is a process of navigating through the unknown with the trust and hope that the overall meaning will be known to her at certain point. This guidance, rather than being a command of the authoritative powering-over subjectivity, is rather a power-with subjectivity that walks through the dark with her. Pastoral care and counseling needs to relate to this power dynamic rather than trying to assume a power-over role.

### *Non-Linear Process*

A journeying image of non-linear process describes the Bible reading process found in my interviewees very well. I found their reading process non-linear, a winding process in which the authoritative discipline and guidance only plays a role of reference or side post. This is intrinsically different from the assumptions of the process of biblical exegesis that pastors are trained to do to prepare their sermons. In exegesis, by navigating through texts, culture, history and interpretive lenses, the exegete comes to excavate a meaning of the text<sup>3</sup>: in contrast, it seems that in my interviewees’ life, the immediate meaning that a Bible reading or a sermon brings to the person is often only provisional

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<sup>3</sup> This linear process of meaning finding is also an issue of historical/critical analysis of the Bible. When the meaning is to be expected to be discovered through the analysis of the textual, historical facts, “the historicity and diversity” becomes a “major issue in relating the Bible to practical theology,” as Craig Bartholomew points out in his article “In Front of the Text: the Quest of Hermeneutics,” 144.

and not-yet realized as personally meaningful. The meaning of the text is realized only when they encounter the subjectivity of the message in relationship, which can happen at the moment of encounter or at any other point in life. Kathy describes this process when she compares teaching the Bible to teaching in school:

You know, because, it's, but here, even if you don't understand now, you have so much more time to understand it, as in like, even though you don't understand it in elementary, I can still, we can still, keep on reminding them, teaching them through junior high and high school, you know, but at school, If you don't learn it then, you might not be going to the next grade. Or we have a set curriculum, that, too. (But Bible is life long process, and the understanding can change.) Understanding can change, I believe. Even though they cannot understand now, maybe there's a reason they don't understand it now.

The understanding that Kathy talks about is the moment when the biblical message comes to mean something to the person. Others, pastors or teachers, can teach them the message repeatedly throughout a person's lifespan, but when it comes to have meaning, there is a reason it does. Thus, the Bible reading process is often non-linear: Mina says that the biblical messages float around her in the air and crystalize when a relationship or a situation requires its engagement. Oneil, in his nineteen times of handwriting the whole Bible gets surprised each time he writes it again, because there are different passages that are new to him, as those passages reveal different meanings. The Bible reading is a non-linear convoluted wandering process, a journey with a "lamp on my feet," in Korean American experience a process with lots of holes through which postcolonial imagination is to be unpacked. This journey has its scenic or festive transformative moments when the subjectivity of the Bible moves their heart poignantly, bringing the passages alive into personally meaningfulness. In their experience, this subjectivity does not power-over: the

convoluted wandering is experienced as power-with while the transformative moments are characterized by power-for,<sup>4</sup> an incarnational moment of the subjectivity of the Bible.

### *Power Dynamics*

When we understand this dynamic in Bible reading, then it is immediately clear that power dynamics are important factors in this experience. If a pastoral person wants to relate to this relationship formed between the Bible and the reader, it would be prudent for that person to have the capacity to relate to the Bible-reading relationship both in the wandering moments and in the transformative moments. When the reader is in the wandering process, going through the moments when the puzzle pieces are yet in their hand with the picture being incomplete with many empty holes or in other words, when the subjectivity of the Bible has not yet realized only to reveal the anxious postcolonial Third Space, can a pastoral person resemble the power-with stance of the Bible to empathize and imagine together with the Bible reader? Can the pastoral person participate in this itinerant, fluid, unstable, restless process of wandering, wondering, imagining, and wrestling, rather than bringing a quick biblical answer to solve the problem of this uneasiness? Can the pastoral person read the Bible together as a provisional message that will come to fruition in its own time?

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<sup>4</sup> Anna Mercedes, *Power-For: Feminism and Christ's Self Giving* (London: T & T Clark, 2011). In this book, Mercedes explores the power dynamic of kenosis, which has been problematized by feminist theologians as disempowering theological category, to claim that in kenosis there is a "tangible power, and also a momentary, fragile, and vulnerable, most surely communicable, power (144)," a power-for. Also see, Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submission: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002). This earlier work by another feminist theologian explores the power dynamic of kenosis to address the concern of Christian feminists' tendency to avoid all kinds of vulnerability which she believes to have long term negative effects. However, her vision of Christological kenosis that culminates as the exercise of the divine power that comes from "gentle omnipotence (Coakley, 37)" which we can have access to through contemplative practice is still a model of power-over according to Mercedes (Mercedes, 13). Here, in this dissertation, I see Mercedes' conceptualization to be useful.

When the reader is encountering transformative moments, the pastoral person finds another empathic way to relate to those moments. Noting that spiritual transformation through the movement of the heart depends so much on the power-for dynamic that the subjectivity of the Bible presents, the pastoral person needs to clarify their understanding of the Bible's power. The theological training that informs most pastoral person's ministry is mostly formed on the assumption that the meaning is found directly through the text of the Bible in conversation with expert, philosophical hermeneutical methods, and thus gives much more power to pastoral persons as the professional biblical-meaning finders. This assumes the authority of the Bible and the pastoral person as power-over, thus as able to instruct the reader with meaningful instructions. However, this research indicates the readers experience the subjectivity of the Bible not as power-over but as power-for them. Honoring the sacred moments of spiritual transformation of the movement of the heart needs to be done by acknowledging such power dynamics of the sacred emptying itself to resonate in the life of the reader.

### **The Pastoral Person**

#### *Pastoral Person as Liminal*

In these tasks, the pastoral person is a liminal person, as Herbert Anderson describes:

The paradox of pastoral care is this: we are familiar with the messy stuff of life and at the same time we are *theotokos* or bearers of God. In order to mediate between the all-embracing, ever-elusive mystery of the Divine and the ordinary stuff of human life, we need to be in habitual contact with the mystery of God while standing in the midst of human pain and struggle. In that sense, pastoral care is liminal work. The Bible is a dependable road to the divine mysteries. That is why it is so important for us to learn the art of weaving human and divine

stories. Double listening and bimodal thinking are at the centre of the care of the souls.<sup>5</sup>

I experienced the liminality of the pastor as bearer of God in my interaction with Oneil quite powerfully. When he treated me with utter respect, because his late mother had taught him, "Treat every pastors as your father and your God," I felt bewildered, with a rush of emotions: embarrassment for feeling inadequate for such an honor, a sense of displacement, curiosity about the gender dynamics, awkwardness to receive such respect from such an older gentleman, and thankfulness. Among those emotions, there was also a tangible sense of grandiosity that secretly made me want to take his gesture to identify me with his parental figure and God. My research diary after that encounter reflects my inner struggle with this feeling of grandiosity. Just having been ordained several months before as a pastor, I noticed the difference between the honors that were given me from what would have been given me if I were not ordained. Not much of me has changed since, other than the public declaration of my ordination, yet, the impulse I felt was to take such grandiose identification as part of me, my personality. This reflection led me to sort out what a pastor meant for him and what my pastoral role was in my interaction with him. Anderson's language of God-bearing rings true, and as the bearer of God, I was in the liminal space, between Oneil and God, carrying blessings to both parties. I carried into his home God's presence and from his home I carried many things that he offered as gifts: his handwritten Bible, copies of his grandfather's awards, newsletters, his stories, and his confessions. As Anderson says, my role was that of double listening and bimodal thinking, a role of standing on the liminal space to attend to both sides of the boundaries.

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<sup>5</sup> Herbert Anderson, "The Bible and Pastoral Care," in *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church*, ed. Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), 204-5.



a crucial element that kept my grandiosity in check. Just like my conceptualization of the postcolonial phenomenological researcher, I found myself needing to stand in the phenomenological bracket to be accountable.

### *Does a Pastor Have Authority?*

My own claim of authority was not needed for Oneil to continue to show respect to me. For me, that was fascinating, as through years of ministering at church, I struggled with the shortage of authority accorded a Korean woman pastoral staff member, which I sensed as an experience stemming from Confucian cultural values that permeated in church. Also as a pastoral person who was not yet ordained until a year ago, such natural respect in the visitation environment was very interesting to me. All the information he had was that I was a pastor coming to hear his story for the sake of my doctoral research. With no need sensed in terms of exulting any authority in the power-over form to gain his respect, and with the observation of the power dynamics that interviewees named, which were power-with and power-for, I wonder whether it is to a certain extent a myth that pastors should have spiritual authority over the ones they serve. Written in 1953, Wayne Oates's introduction to his book *The Bible in Pastoral Care* starts by stating "The Bible has an overwhelming symbolic strength. The fact that a statement is in the Bible endows that statement with a peculiar power, for weal or woe."<sup>6</sup> Interviewing conservative Korean Presbyterian Christian Bible readers, I have wondered if I will find much of the traces of such imposing power of the Bible, but it seems that such understanding may be what would be confessed but a bit distant from what is experienced. Zoë Bennet and Christopher Rowland try to bring up a problem of the Bible by citing the story of the

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<sup>6</sup> Wayne Oates, *The Bible in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 15.

woman who refused the presence of any biblical reading in a safe feminist space created by a group processing feminist theology. Such problem was caused by those who tried to use the Bible as a tool to silence her: it is a problem caused by persons who used the Bible as their own selfobject rather than as scripture with its own subjectivity.<sup>7</sup> Again this is a very different picture of the power of the Bible, contrasting with the experiences of my interviewees. Should pastoral subjectivity be authoritative, or is that a myth created in the formation process of pastors rather than from the wisdom of those we serve?

### *Empathy*

Rather than authority, I think the most urgently needed aspect of the relationship is empathy, which was noticeable in the stories of my interviewees and even in the stories that haunted this study in spectrality like that of *C'hunhyang and Kyeongchun*. Empathy is understood to be the basic ingredient of any therapeutic relationship. Thus, many psychologists have elaborated on this concept. Tracing the similarity among those descriptions by psychologists like Alfred Adler, Karl Menninger, Medard Boss, Carl Whitaker, Thomas Malone, David Wallin, Carl Rogers and Heinz Kohut, Don Browning observes they were

saying more than they realized. We both believed that this affirmation of dignity and worth was an example of the double entendre of language (referring to empathy) that pervades much secular psychotherapy and personality theory and renders it more spiritual than is generally acknowledged.<sup>8</sup>

The dignity and worth that empathy demonstrates by deeply valuing the experience of the other with attention is a commitment to what it means to be a human, not just for the

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<sup>7</sup> Zoë Bennett and Christopher Rowland, "Contextual and Advocacy Readings of the Bible," in *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church*, ed. Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), 185.

<sup>8</sup> Don Browning, *Reviving Christian Humanism: The New Conversation on Spirituality, Theology, and Psychology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 100-1.

therapist but on deeper ontological sense, as Browning points out.<sup>9</sup> In Heinz Kohut's understanding of empathy, he moves deeply into the growth process of the self, where empathy plays the transformative function that turns the archaic form of narcissism into a mature one, enabling the individual to incorporate the affirming glance of the other into oneself.<sup>10</sup> In his lecture, "Reflection on Empathy" Kohut tells a vignette of a toddler walking toward the birds in the park. The toddler looks back to see the eyes of its mother who is watching it walk. Why? This vignette is again found in his article, "The Role of Empathy in Psychoanalytic Cure" where he explains:

As a baby the little girl is picked up by her mother and thereby feels herself part of the omnipotent strength and calmness of the idealized selfobject. Later in childhood, however, when she walks away from her mother for the first time, the little girl will try to maintain the bond to her mother by turning around and looking back at the mother's face. If she is an emotionally healthy child who has been surrounded by a milieu of emotionally healthy selfobjects, she will do so not primarily because she is afraid and needs to be reassured that she can return, but rather to obtain the confirming reverberation of her mother's proud smile at her great new achievement.<sup>11</sup>

The experiences between the transformative heart moving moments, which are sometimes experienced as dull, unknown, and dark and sometimes experienced as struggles, wrestling and, most importantly and uncomfortably, as anxiety, require empathic understanding not just for the pain, but also for such maturation of narcissism as Kohut is seeing in the daughter's looking back and the mother's proud smile. As the pastor is liminal as the God-bearer, such empathic glance has the potential to encourage the spiritual growth process that the Bible readers need.

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<sup>9</sup> Browning, 101.

<sup>10</sup> Heinz Kohut, "The Role of Empathy in Psychoanalytic Cure," in *How Does Analysis Cure?* ed. Arnold Goldberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 185.

<sup>11</sup> Kohut, "The Role of Empathy in Psychoanalytic Cure," 186.

As pastoral theologian Carrie Doehring says, “empathy is a balancing act” that “involves two simultaneous and opposite relational skills: (1) making connection with another person by experiencing what it is like to be that person, and (2) maintaining separation from the other person by being aware of one’s own feelings and thoughts.”<sup>12</sup> For relational-cultural theorist Judith Jordan, such balancing happens between “affective and cognitive, subjective and objective, active and passive,”<sup>13</sup> making such balancing a fluid process. Thus, the maintenance of separation from the other person happens to become a delicate boundary maintenance, resembling so much what a postcolonial phenomenological researcher needs to do. Jordan says, “self boundary flexibility is important, since there is an ‘as if,’ trying-out quality to the experience, whereby one places one’s self in the other’s shoes or looks through the other’s eyes.” In the relational cultural therapist’s effort to grow into relationships, the empathy is coupled with authenticity, an element that makes therapeutic relationships mutual, providing opportunities for all persons in relationship to be vulnerable and powerful, reflective and truthful. Mutual empathy achieved through efforts to be both empathic and mutual resembles the subaltern longing that I have identified in *C’hunhyangjun*, which continues to affect Korean American spirituality in its deepest transformative moments in Bible reading. Maybe like *Mongyong*, the pastoral work needs to have the effort to grow together into relationship through mutual empathy and authenticity. This requires the pastoral persons to take the load of authority off from their shoulders and become willing to be vulnerable in their empathy with the person to whom they seek to offer care. When

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<sup>12</sup> Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Jordan, “Empathy and Self Boundaries,” in *Women’s Growth in Connection: Writings from the Stone Center*, ed. Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Jean Miller, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), 69.

enough mutuality is formed, the energy coming from this relationship can have the communal impact that *Mongyong* was able to observe. It is a process of allowing oneself to be moved and changed by others, the exact process that transformative experiences entailed in my interviewees' Bible reading.

### **Pastoral Vision: Future Memory for Complex Spiritual Maturity**

Future memory is a term I am borrowing from Paul Hanton's conceptualization of the miracle question in solution focused brief therapy.<sup>14</sup> When a person is stuck in the problems of the present, visualizing a concrete future with various details that can function as the road post signs often help persons to find a path out of their present predicaments and provide a road map for a better future. The pairing of the words future and memory sounds paradoxical: this paradox brings the power of imaginative vision so much closer to us. When we have visualized a concrete future, the act of visualization creates a memory in us, so when we see the road post signs, we can recognize them as evidence of the direction toward the vision as we continue to live on. Such imaginative vision toward the future is a vision for growth and maturity.

I do not regard my practical theological reflection as problem solving *per se*, but rather an opportunity to expand the space in which theological reflection can happen. I suggest that building a future memory of what spiritual growth and maturity can be is a pastoral task that could benefit those who are in the third space where postcolonial anxiety could have tightening effects that result in controlling cultural images, as we have explored through the image of the missional empire. I think the tremendous number of seminary graduates each year in Korea, who overflow into the United States, filling

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Hanton, *Skills in Solution Focused Brief Counseling and Psychotherapy* (London, Sage Publications, 2011), 76.

classrooms of North American theological institutes when these institutes are struggling to survive in the postmodern climate, testify to the lack of future memory of spiritually mature persons within the Korean Churches. Within my own church life and ministry, often those who experience spiritual growth imagine their path for maturity only in seminaries or in mission field, because alternative visions of “a spiritually mature person” are often lacking. The evangelical motto of “What Would Jesus Do?” only works as a growth-inducing inspiration as far as the image of Jesus as the picture of spiritual maturity is not limited by controlling cultural images. So the question becomes: how do we find a more fluid and expansive future memory of spiritual growth and maturity?

One piece of wisdom that we can gain from solution-focused brief therapy is that such future memory is constructed by drawing from the concrete memories of past successes. The moments when a person experiences his or her heart moved could be explored in depth and in detail to identify the spiritual dynamics and the surrounding situations, history, and relationships. By zooming into such experience, if a pastor can help the person see more layers of that experience, such experience could serve as a road post sign of a future memory. What I learned from my interviews is that those moments that are hidden in the life of a Bible reader are sacred and profound. Yet such sacred moments are very fragile when they are not processed in relationship. In my research design, I had decided to insert my observation of the elements that moved my heart to explore them in depth in the second interviews, which turned out to be a very pastoral process that named those sacred moments in my own way. I found that those fragile moments that were at risk of being lost in the sea of other life memories were highlighted, celebrated, concretized, thus solidifying them into a future memory. This

process may involve imagination of the pastoral persons, as they participate in the wandering process of the Bible reading, they are also facing the cracks and holes within the puzzle that invites postcolonial imagination. Just like the black windows of Orthodox Church's icons, those cracks invite visions of life of resurrection beyond the darkness of the hole.

I had a moment when I found myself floating an image in my head, so I brought it back to Kathy who inspired that image in me. The following is part of the letter I wrote to Kathy:

It is an image that came to me as I reflected on the interview. It is an image of a rock. Maybe it came from the language of rock bottom that you hit when you were going out. Or maybe somewhere else. But in my mind, I imagined that the metaphorical "rock" that was at the bottom of your struggle, surfaced gradually in your stories and became a solid rock, a foundation on which you could build. The rock at the bottom, seemed to have been a mixture of a lot of things: the sense of insecurity that you as a teenager must have constantly felt when you went through the turmoil of your parents' divorce, the pain that comes from the broken relationships, the burden that you must have felt with various role changes including financial ones, and your soul's search for maturity not getting fulfilled at church, and so on. These are some of the things that I imagined to be part of the rock bottom you felt. Probably the void that you tried to fill up with the weekend fun at the clubs was created by whatever difficulties you had to go through. However, as I listened to your story, this rock transformed and came up to the surface. What was pain-filled gradually turned into a ground from which you can reach out to those who are at their own rock-bottoms. Now this painful past serves you as a firm ground on which you stand and extend your empathic understanding to others by holding on to the relationship that you and they cherish together. When you were at the rock-bottom, God smothered you with love through relationships with your friends. Now standing on the rock, you may know that you are in the relationship that smothers others in God's love. I wondered about what chapter 6 in Matthew meant for you, and for now, it looks like this passage seemed to have been the seismic energy that made the rock came up to surface. I would like to ask you to reflect on this image and let me know if I'm getting you right.

In the second interview, she reflected on this image. She did neither blindly take the image as her own nor denied its validity, but it functioned as something she dialogued with. The following is her reflection on this:

(How did my image of rock feel?) You made it sound a little bit more better than how I said it. Because the way I said it was negative, but somehow you put that into a positive perspective. (That's what I was trying to say. The very difficult part sort of transforming into your ground.) So when I was reading it, it made me feel better. (It did?) Yeah. I was really surprised how you got all these from the interview. But. (What was surprising?) The whole rock part. (Really?) Yeah. Like the rock bottom was a mixture of different struggles and stuff, that, too, I feel like maybe the rock bottom was, because when I was going through the divorce too in 8th grade, I didn't cry about it or anything. I was very numb about it. So I think, not that the divorce affects me now, because I'm older and I understand more, but I think it was, everything that I was going through. I just let it out. But in the wrong way. (Do you think that was necessary?) Um, no. But the thing is I wouldn't have realized all these things if it wasn't for that, too. In a way, I'm kind of glad that my life got torn apart, because for humans, their lives got to be torn apart for them to understand the real thing. So. I don't want to be like I can't believe I did that. There are times when I regret that, but at the same time I want to know what that happened, if that didn't happen. I would still be going to church, because it's just church. If that didn't happen, I wouldn't have met my best friend right now. (That's true.) If that didn't happen, I would have, because there's this friend, she's a bad friend, if that didn't happen, then she'll probably still be my friend and she's be dragging me down. I'm not friends with her any more.

When such imagination happened in the context of highlighting moments of heart movement, which was the surrounding context of this interchange, such imagination also functioned as a way to expand her understanding of the sacred moment in which transformation happened. Such process can be a stepping-stone to affirm the spiritual growth that is happening in the person and pointer for the growth trajectory that can have fluid and expansive possibilities in forming a future memory that is not necessarily associated with the culturally controlling image that creates anxiety in postcolonial contexts.



Such highlighting of sacred moments to aid the formation of future memory is a complex process, when it is part of the continual ministry in the church. Also, if those sacred moments are solidified as another controlling image, then the growth will get limited as well; yet what is needed is to see and honor such moments as part of the process. Here, I want to come back to the image of T-person that Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi advocates, a person who is able to hold complexity within. While autotelic experiences as the basic ingredient of such T-person's maturity may be limiting if those flow experiences are limited to hedonic experiences that satisfy only the person's inner needs, those who can extend the flow experience into relational and communal spaces have tremendous opportunity to expand their capacity to hold the complexity of life in themselves. The practice of practical theological reflection shows a way to hold various layers of the complexity of the messy life experience together to foster capacity to reflect on such complexity. In the postcolonial context in which Korean and Korean American churches grow, I found that the advocacy reading of the Bible through the lenses of Minjung theology, liberation theology, feminist theology, and postcolonial theology fail to reach the audience. As Zoë Bennet and Christopher Rowland say, such reading operated on a "complex dynamic of suspicion and trust,"<sup>15</sup> which is a difficult burden to bear when the Korean and Korean American Christian's group self formation is still in process, for example, wrestling with postcolonial anxiety and the challenges of immigration. For those reading to have a space, I believe that the Korean American should be able to have a fluid and expansive theological reflection space where such complexity could be embraced. I see the possibility in the process of creating multiple, diverse future memories. The growth-fostering pastoral role may well be found in

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<sup>15</sup> Bennett and Rowland, 175.

creation of such reflective space rather than imposing a controlling image with authority. In such bigger reflective space, issues that had been ignored as irrelevant for Christian dialogues such as social justice issues, political criticism, and ecological issues can find a place to be part of the bigger puzzle.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Concluding Reflection**

The postcolonial pastoral theological phenomenological research stance I propose requires constant self-reflection to guide the meaning making process as the data from the interviews are put through the phenomenological reductions. I found that when this process is married with practical theological methodology, it produced a quite rich range of reflection that was rewarding and at times surprising. I am very thankful for that.

When the Bible reading experience was approached from a relational perspective, with focus on the layperson's experience, the data revealed that their experience of the Bible is not as linear as many pastoral practices assume. In other words, the paradigm in which the Bible reveals motivational meaning when read only depicts a partial picture of the overall experience. As sacred scripture to which the readers come back over and over again, there is a non-linear process that reveals relational dynamics that contribute to the spiritual growth of the individuals and the communities. This understanding, I have argued, can provide a space in which a broader understanding of growth and maturity can be held.

#### **Contribution, Limitation, and Future Research Direction**

When Stephen Pattison mentioned the "strange silence" about the Bible in pastoral theology, there were many possible, contributing factors. Through practical theological dialogue with the phenomenological research findings, I have traced the language of movement of the heart to identify the different layers of the transformative experienced marked by the spirituality of the movement of the heart. Both dialogues in

psychology and Confucian spirituality proved to be fruitful in revealing the previously unidentified dynamics in the spiritual formation process of Bible reading. I have identified the assumptions about the Bible as authoritative text that motivates changes in people's life to be less than prominent in the transformative experiences of my interviewees. Also, I have connected the subaltern consciousness that manifests as spectrality in the spirituality of Bible reading, which needs to be faced to deal with the anxiety of the postcolonial situation in which Korean and Korean American Christians find themselves.

This study is limited in its scope, because the practical theological reflection mostly stems from the narratives of my interviewees who have had successfully engaged the Bible in depth. The experiences of those who have difficulty relating to the Bible are not reflected in this study. Study of such experience has been addressed by some scholars who walked before me, like Wayne Oates, but it is also something that can be explored more in depth in the future. Given that the cultural climate of the postcolonial Korean American life is different from that of Oates and many others who have treaded in this area, a study in the experience of not being able to relate to the Bible or that of painful relationship with the Bible could be explored further with pastoral theological perspective.

Having found that those who relate to the Bible's subjectivity experience much heart-moving spirituality, I also wonder: what is the driving force for those Christians who do not believe the Bible to have such subjectivity? Stephen Pattison has identified the lack of scripture principle as a characterization of modern biblical criticism, an area of study that contributes significantly to seminarians' formation process as pastoral

persons. With the findings from this research in my heart, I become quite curious about the relationships that biblical scholars form with the Bible, especially as I look back at the disconnection I felt as a seminarian between the education based on such biblical criticism and the pulpit. What kind of negotiations would happen if persons who hold the scripture principle deeply would involve themselves in critical biblical studies? Or what kind of narratives would get formed around scripture principles in their relationship with the Bible? What are their relational sources for their spiritual growth? Does the Bible play a part? I imagine such exploration will reveal another set of rich data to be reflected on to assess the current state of Christianity, where the Bible has been regarded as having a pivotal role in the life of Christians.

## **Appendix A**

### **Informed Consent for Interviews<sup>16</sup>**

#### **Title of Study**

The Bible in My Life

#### **Principle Investigator**

Hee-Kyu Heidi Park

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#### **Institution**

Department of Practical Theology, Spiritually Integrative Psychotherapy

Claremont School of Theology/Claremont Lincoln University

1325 N. College Ave. Claremont, CA 91711

Dean: Dr. Philip Clayton

Chairperson of Institutional Review Board: Dr. Andrew Dreitcer

#### **Introduction**

I am Hee-Kyu Heidi Park, a PhD student in Practical Theology, with a concentration in Spiritually Integrative Psychotherapy at Claremont Lincoln University. I am conducting this phenomenological study as part of my dissertation research. My research advisor is Dr. Kathleen Greider, Professor of Practical Theology, Spiritual Care, and Counseling at Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Lincoln University. You can reach her by calling (909) 447-2540. You can reach me at 203 824 0785. Please contact either of us if you have questions about this study.

#### **Purpose of this Research Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand the role that the Bible as scripture plays in the everyday lives of Korean American Protestant adults. The understanding gained through this phenomenological study will be then utilized for further reflection to understand its implication for pastoral theology and pastoral care and counseling.

#### **Procedures**

If you consent, you will be asked to have two interviews with me in a mutually agreed place on two different days. In the first interview, I will ask you to share with me your experience regarding the Bible. After the first interview is concluded, I will reflect on your responses and on my response to what you share, and bring my reflection back to you in the second interview. In the second interview, I will share my reflection with you and then ask you to talk about your response or reaction to my reflection. I will make

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<sup>16</sup> Adapted from a sample consent form by Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 96-97.

digital recordings of both interviews, which will be destroyed following the completion of this study. I plan to have 6-10 participants for this study.

### **Alternative Procedures**

In case meeting me in person for the second interview becomes impossible for any reason, we will discuss the possibility of talking over the internet in the form of skype conversation/ internet chat (only if such mode of conversation is comfortable for the participant), or email. While this is not the preferable mode of interview, if such a procedure becomes necessary, prior to the conversation I will email to you my reflection and questions stemming from the reflecting, so that you can prepare your response to them. In such case, I want you to imagine that we are speaking face-to-face, and respond to the questions as fully as you would in an interview.

### **Time Required**

Each interview will take 1-2 hours of your time. There will be two interviews on two different days.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even when you choose to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to withdraw from the study without penalty. If you want to withdraw from the study, simply let me know of your intention.

### **Risks**

There are no known risks associated with this interview. However, it is possible that you might feel distress in the course of conversation. If this happens, please inform me promptly. In case you experience severe distress, I will provide you appropriate pastoral care and give you referral information for you to receive other care if you desire.

### **Benefits**

While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or that you will find the conversation meaningful. This study is intended to benefit pastoral theologians, pastoral caregivers, pastoral counselors and those who receive pastoral care by enlivening our conversation about the theology and practice of pastoral care and counseling and the role of the Bible in it.

### **Confidentiality/Anonymity**

Your name will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law in all of the reporting and writing related to this study. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the tapes. When I report the research findings through my dissertation or publications, I will use pseudonyms – made up names – for all participants, unless you specify in writing that you wish to be identified by name. If you wish to choose your own pseudonym for this study, please indicate the first name you would like me to use for you here.

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While I will make every effort to protect your privacy and keep what you say to me confidential, there are limits to the confidentiality that I can keep. As a pastor, I am legally mandated to follow certain protocols in three situations: if you are in danger of harming yourself; if you are in danger of harming others; and/or if information you share indicates that children, elders, or other dependent adults might be in danger of neglect or abuse.

### **Sharing the Results**

I will use the results of my interviews as part of a multidisciplinary practical theological reflection that will serve as my PhD dissertation. The dissertation will be submitted to the faculty of the Claremont School of Theology in November 2013 and, after its completion, a copy and a microfiche of the completed dissertation will be made available in the Claremont School of Theology Library. There is the possibility that I will publish all or part of this study or refer to it in published writing in the future. In all events, I will continue to protect your anonymity, as described above.

If you are satisfied with your understanding of the information in this document and agree to participate in this research project, please sign and date both copies of the form, and take one copy for your records.

### **Participant's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please print your name below**

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Researchers' Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hee-Kyu Heidi Park**



## Appendix B

### The Bible in My Life: Interview Intake Survey

#### 내 삶속의 성경 말씀: 인터뷰 준비 설문

익명 혹은 본명 Pseudonym or your name :

나이 Age :

가족 사항 Family members you live with:

Relation to you 관계	Age /Occupation 나이/직	Marital Status 결혼하셨나요?	Comments 기타

현재 직업 What do you do for a living?:

한국에서는 어떤 직업을 가지고 계셨나요? What did you do for a living in Korea?:

미국에 오신 지 얼마나 되셨나요? How long have you lived in the States?:

학력 Education:

초등          중등          고등          대학          대학원

현재 다니시는 교회 Your Current Church:

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교회에서의 섬기시는 직책 Leadership/Servantship in church:

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기독교인이 되신 지 얼마나 되셨나요? How long have you been a Christian?:

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현재 다니시는 교회에 다니신지는 얼마나 되셨나요? How long have you been in your current church?

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감사합니다.

Thank you for filling out this form.

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